

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational  
Center for Human Development**



**Readiness for Religious Life**

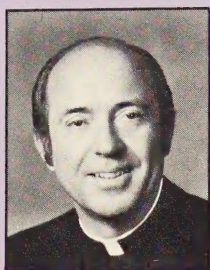
**Preserving Health in Turbulent Times**

**Experiencing Termination in Community**

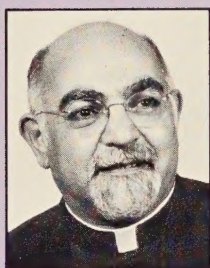
**Meekness and Inner Strength**

**Worldwide Jesuit Formation**





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# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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The editors are pleased to consider for publication articles relating to the ongoing work of those involved in helping other people through religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, and counseling.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate to the associate editor, Linda Amadeo, P.O. Box 218, Somerville, MA 02143. Copy should be typewritten double spaced on 8½ × 11 inch white paper with generous margins on each page. Manuscripts are received with the understanding that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 5,000 words with no more than 10 listings in the bibliography; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide names of author(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Illustrations, if any, should be submitted as high-quality, glossy, unmounted black-and-white photographic prints. Do not send original artwork.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

All submissions should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

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# EDITORIAL

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## COLORS THAT DISCLOSE THE PLAN OF GOD

**D**uring recent months many of our readers have told us that they like the different colors we have selected for the covers and inside pages of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. Naturally, we are always glad to hear such words of approval and are grateful to those who have taken the time to phone or write them. Color, we believe, can help to enliven the experience of reading and reflecting on human nature. It can symbolize the developmental seasons of a person's life, each with its own special beauty and a promise of still deeper richness and loveliness later on. Besides, it's fun for us to choose the shades from the thousand-hued color charts—shades that are suggestive of the season of the year when the issue will reach our readers—at least those living in the northern hemisphere.

Behavioral scientists are just beginning to appreciate the power of color. They are finding that it can calm aggression, combat depression, increase strength, control appetite, assist digestion, change personality traits, and even cure illness. Pink, for example, was studied at the Institute of Biosocial Research in Tacoma, Washington, and was found to decrease anger, aggression, and physical strength. Red is used to cover menus, tables, and walls in many restaurants because it has been shown to make people salivate. On the other hand the conflicting tints displayed in fast-food establishments subtly urge a quick turnover of clientele; at least that's what is reported by the *Seattle Times* newswriter Judy Thorne.

A rainbow, as we know from Genesis, is a reminder of God's guarantee that he will never inflict another deluge upon us. For young and old its multiple delicate shades are a joy to behold, especially

for people of faith who remember God's promise. The articles we present in this issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT are also variegated and are designed to generate hopefulness for people of faith. Our writers explore a wide range of topics including religious formation, community expectations and terminations, meekness, perfection, readiness for community life, and ways of preserving health in stressful times. We hope our readers will find that this summer fare provides the proverbial "something for everyone."

One striking aspect of summertime is the way the blue of the sky and the green of the leaves and fields set the mood for the season. Blue is calming and cooling, a hue for leisure time; together with green, it falls at the more pleasurable end of the color spectrum. Apparently, God chose these shades with the intention that the season be a time for some quiet, restful hours as well as for sunshine-gladdened activities. We hope this summer will turn out to be just this sort of season for all our readers, and that these articles will contribute to your enjoyment.



**James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.**



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Alcoholism Risks

I read with interest your article "The Religious Alcoholic" in the Winter 1980 issue. You wrote: "Total abstinence should be the goal, even though this aim is seldom achieved." I would say that it is achieved by a majority of those in AA—or they would not still be there. Further, even to see a line like that gives new fuel to those who refuse treatment, i.e., "He says hardly anyone achieves that goal and you are expecting me not to drink!"

While it is beguiling for theoreticians to propose that a true alcoholic might be able to drink in a controlled way after treatment, what recovering alcoholic wants to try out the theory and end up in the gutter again? It might be a nice idea, but for many, many people the risk is too great. For the theoretician disproof of the theory may mean only that he has an unfounded hypothesis; for the individual, it may involve great suffering and death.

There are so many possible causes of alcoholism that it is practically useless, in the individual case, to try to probe them. It is better to "never mind what was and even is; what's important is what can be."

I'm glad you added the possible need for group intervention and confrontation when dealing with the alcoholic. To do it one-on-one can be enormously threatening and is often useless.

Anonymous

*Editor's note:* Generally we do not publish letters signed anonymously. This time we chose to exercise a little flexibility and made a rare exception.

Most alcoholics die trying to drink responsibly; kids love to prove they are responsible by drinking. This implies that nondrinkers are irresponsible and drinking is a proof of responsibility. There is no

special skill or ability to drink that can be developed by practice. Even if "responsible drinking" were not a potential booby trap for the rest of us, it is totally inappropriate for the group we are most concerned about: the potential alcoholics.

The omission of any mention of Al-Anon [in "The Religious Alcoholic," Winter 1980] is almost frightening. Many religious women who were concerned about a drinking sister have found great help in this organization. Its little pamphlet "Homeward Bound" has been valuable in assisting the sisters to welcome a recovering alcoholic back into the community.

In view of recent studies using CAT scans, ECG, pneumoencephalography, the electron microscope (postmortem), and psychological tests sensitive to brain damage, it is surprising to see a physician state that there is no convincing evidence that nerve cells die as a result of alcohol. And finally, the National Clergy Conference on Alcoholism is not in Chicago but at 3112 Seventh Street N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017.

James E. Royce, S.J.  
Director, Alcohol Studies  
Seattle University

*Editor's note:* Father Royce, a member of the Board of Directors of the National Council on Alcoholism, has just completed work on a new book, *Alcohol Problems and Alcoholism: A Comprehensive Survey*, which will be published this summer by Macmillan Free Press.

## Encouraging Gift

I think that HUMAN DEVELOPMENT can be of help to the students of the 68 major seminaries in the missions in India and Africa entrusted to this Pontifical Mission Aid Society. May I ask you, therefore, to



place these seminars on the list of subscribers for two years; I am enclosing a complete list of their addresses. Please let me know how to make the payment.

S. C. Lourdusamy  
President  
*Pontificium Opus a S. Petro Apostolo  
pro Clero Missionum*  
Rome

*Editor's note:* We are deeply grateful to Archbishop Lourdusamy for making these 68 gift subscriptions possible.

**Focusing Workshop**

I was thrilled to read the review of *Focusing* in your Winter 1980 issue. Eugene Gendlin's work is much more than a self-help book. The technique can be

very effective in helping people to listen to themselves and to reverence the mystery of who they are before God. I would encourage the use of focusing with another person, ideally the same person each time.

Your readers may be interested to know that a workshop entitled "Christian Presence through Focusing and Healing Listening" is offered in different parts of the country by the Reverend Edwin H. McMahon, Ph.D., and the Reverend Peter A. Campbell, Ph.D. The workshop is sponsored by the Institute for Research in Spirituality, 6305 Greeley Hill Road, Coulterville, California 95311. In the New England area the workshop is sponsored by the Genesis Spiritual Life Center, 53 Mill Street, Westfield, Massachusetts 01085.

Barbara R. McLaughlin  
Brighton, Massachusetts

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**NEW! READY AUGUST 1981**

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Written specifically for men and women religious to help them understand the dynamics involved and to improve the quality of their lives while living in local community. The authors focus directly on the problem of how to make community groups function more smoothly. "Only the conviction that we are called by God makes community living reasonable, a value in our lives and a source of growth for us." Though the emphasis of this book is on dynamics as they affect community living, the knowledge is equally applicable to the experiences encountered among staffs and in parish life.

**Authors,** Sister Rosine Hammett, C.S.C. and Brother Loughlan Sofield, S.T.

**NEW! READY JULY 1981**

Volume I of **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** containing all the feature articles which appeared in the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter 1980 issues.

**Editor,** James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.

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# PRESERVING HEALTH IN TURBULENT TIMES

JAMES J. GILL, S.J., M.D.

If there is any single God-given gift that calls for constant gratitude, it is surely the gift of life. The same is certainly true for the closely related, inestimable blessing of good health. Unfortunately, the emotional stress we all experience to some degree every day of our lives is a threat to both these gifts; it can make life miserable, take health away, even bring on death. And in the lives of those who want to do more than simply survive and stay healthy—all who choose to invest themselves lovingly in the ministry of service to others—stress, by causing illness, can impede the accomplishment of this aim. The price of preventing such interference is taking reasonably good care of ourselves.

Some people are doing this; many are not. For example, there are parents, teachers, civic officials, clergy, and religious whose physical and emotional well-being has been eroded by protracted stress and who have consequently lost their effectiveness in dealing with those they care about. While in pain, a person can be productive at work, considerate and helpful in relating to others, and even a saint. But disease generally makes life, work, and relationships more difficult and when prolonged or severe, may even spoil these. To prevent this from happening in our own lives and in the lives of those in our care, it is worth our time and effort to take another close look at the ways of coping with stress, preventing unnecessary illness, and improving our physical and mental health—especially in these potentially very stressful years.

Most people in the United States today know a fair amount about stress. They are aware that it can bring physical discomfort and psychological and social malfunctioning—a serious medical illness or emotional breakdown lasts a long time if it is severe. Many people have, whether deliberately or seemingly by chance, found a way to cut down some of the everyday stress in their lives: they may take a long weekend off when exhausted from work,

have a drink before dinner to calm down at the end of a hectic day, play golf or go fishing to get rid of their tension. Perhaps these people don't know how to formulate a precise definition of stress, but they know the right things to do for themselves at the right times. However, if the emotional wear and tear becomes excessively heavy, they may find themselves at a complete loss. Failure to win a promotion, terminal illness of a family member, divorce, or a son's arrest on an illicit drug charge could stress them beyond their resources, leaving them physically or emotionally ill.

## SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Some people have an even deeper familiarity with the reality of stress and with the scientific literature to which physiologists, endocrinologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists have been contributing throughout most of this century (beginning with American physiologist Dr. Walter Cannon's work and the widely read contributions of Dr. Hans Selye in Montreal). These individuals are aware that emotional stress has many definitions but is usually considered to be a state of uncomfortable tension, psychological pressure, or conflict. They may even be familiar with Dr. Gerald Caplan's definition that appeared in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*: "I define stress as a condition in which there is a marked discrepancy between the demands made on an organism and the organism's capability to respond, the consequences of which will be detrimental to the organism's future in respect to conditions essential to its well-being." Such people know that some of the common signs and symptoms of stress are headaches, backaches, compulsive smoking, impatience, worrying, stomachaches, elevated blood pressure, fatigue, excessive eating, heartburn, insomnia, boredom, and an inability to concentrate. They understand that



stress-produced anxiety is the emotion that is felt when we believe harm is about to befall us but feel unable to protect ourselves.

Anger, the other principal stress emotion, results from frustration (when we are prevented from getting something we want or need or are compelled to experience something unpleasant), from infringement (when someone's behavior is intrusive or detracts from our status or self-worth), or from a perception of injustice or inequity. An example of anxiety would be the anticipatory discomfort that distresses a person who enters a group experience in which he may be expected to disclose previously hidden facts about his life. Anger can arise when an individual's desire for solitude is frustrated by noisy visitors.

## COPING TECHNIQUES

People who know the literature on stress understand that there are many ways to cope with the stressors that produce these unpleasant, or painful, emotions. Perhaps the most obvious tactic is avoidance; another would be a change of attitude toward whatever is occurring. If an individual wants something and is frustrated and angry over not getting it, he can reduce his stress by giving up his demand for it. For example, a mother who wants her daughter to study for a particular profession that would ensure her daughter's economic future finds herself angry when the daughter ignores her wishes. By giving up her desire and allowing the girl to make her career decision according to

her own preference, the mother could eliminate her stress.

Another fact that is familiar to people who have done some scientific reading about stress is that there is one physical state that cannot coexist with stress emotions. That state is relaxation. Transcendental meditation, yoga, Zen, the rest period after physical exercise, progressive muscular relaxation, self-hypnosis with autosuggestion, biofeedback, and countless similar techniques—some as simple as deliberate deep breathing—can enable a person to eliminate stress by producing relaxation of body and mind. Resources such as these can be employed to decrease stress after it has begun; blocking the development of stress can often be accomplished by using one of these methods shortly before entering a potentially stressful set of circumstances. Many people make a practice of using one or several of these techniques every day as a preventive measure.

Physiologists and psychologists have clarified how these strategies work. They accomplish the same result that is achieved by a tranquilizer such as Valium or Librium. They affect the autonomic nervous system by decreasing the activity of its sympathetic branch while increasing its parasympathetic, healing function. While undergoing stress in any form, the sympathetic nerves effect a release of hormones and steroids (adrenaline, noradrenaline, ACTH, cortisone) from the organs that produce them, preparing the body for action, usually of a "fight or flight" nature. If the stress is brief and the quantity of secretions kept moderate, no harm is

## STRESS EMOTIONS

**Perceiving that**

- 1 harm is about to befall me
- 2 I cannot protect myself

 **Anger**

**Perceiving that**

- 1 my desire or need is being frustrated
- 2 a right is being violated
- 3 my self-worth is being discredited

 **Anxiety**



done. But if the individual's emotional state is prolonged because of continuous or frequently recurring periods of frustration, anger, or anxiety, these chemical substances can damage the tissue in whatever organ or system the person has inherited a particular vulnerability. For some persons this will be the heart, and they will be prone to develop coronary artery disease and heart attacks; others are likely to generate a peptic ulcer in their gastrointestinal tract, migraine headaches related to their vascular system, arthritis in their connective tissue, asthma in their respiratory system, and so on.

Those who know all these things about stress—how it occurs and what it can do to harm us within our body, mind, family, community, work life, and prayer—and who are also familiar with some specific ways of coping with it and when and how to apply them are indeed fortunate. But such knowledge is simply useless unless deliberately put into practice.

## EXISTENTIAL STRESS

It would be relatively easy to teach Americans to deal with the stressors afflicting them in everyday life if stressors appeared only in the form of annoyances, such as slow-moving traffic on a rainy day, baggage arriving one flight late at the start of a long-awaited vacation, or TV transmission failing during the final round of a very close championship boxing match. The problem today is that we are living in a period of more than just brief moments of localized distress; possibilities for feeling frustrated and enraged or threatened and anxious are spread across the horizon, and they are capable of disrupting the emotional and physical well-being of almost anyone. I'm referring to the new but already perennial background stressors that are impinging on our consciousness and cumulatively tending to erode our peace of mind and jeopardize our health. We encounter these stressors through the headlines of our daily newspapers, news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, radio talk programs, morning, noon, and evening televised news, and conversations with our worried neighbors. The all-too-familiar litany includes rising unemployment, worsening economy, skyrocketing costs, increasing violence and crime (even in the streets of formerly safe villages and towns), victims of rape, assassinations, hostages, refugees, war, revolutions, the threat of nuclear bombardment and annihilation, poverty, malnutrition, natural catastrophes, environmental pollution, ecological blight, energy depletion, escalating divorce rate, millions of teenage pregnancies, rampant drug abuse and alcoholism, and on and on and on. Day after day we breathe an air that's stifling with such pungent and repulsive aromas. We can't escape them. Only very rarely do the mass media feature a story that truly brightens our outlook and temporarily outshines the gloom. Many people, whose

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**Millions of people  
in our country are  
left anxious every day  
and—because they  
feel powerless—they  
are frustrated  
and angry.**

---

expressions of distress I've recently heard in buses, on planes, waiting for subway trains, in supermarket lines, or in stores downtown, say they have the feeling that something has gone wrong with the world, that too many things have gone awry, all at the same time. They are wondering what has happened to our traditional hopefulness, our belief in the inevitability of progress, and our confidence that we can solve the problems that confront humankind. As a result, the single most prevalent feeling that is afflicting more and more people is one of individual powerlessness. Complex forces at work in seemingly unintelligible ways are weaving a pattern of stress that threatens to wipe out our sense of well-being. Millions of people in our country are left anxious every day and—because they feel powerless—they are frustrated and angry, inclined to seek someone to blame, and as a result tend to erupt with hostility or to withdraw into themselves, depressed.

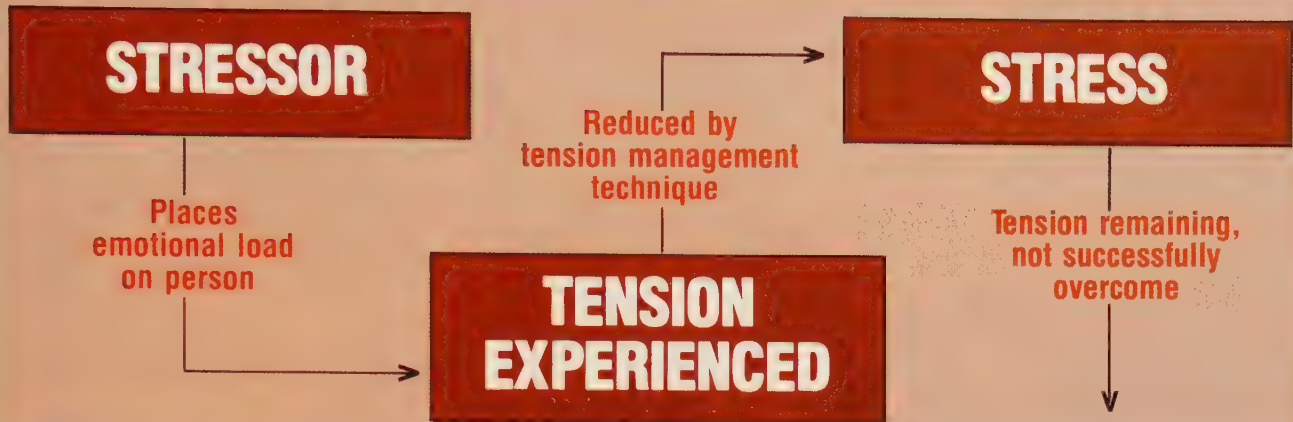
## ANTONOVSKY ON STRESS

This unappealing situation brings to mind a man whose name may not be familiar to many of our readers (but will become widely known, I suspect, during the years ahead), but who has been doing outstanding work in the field of sociology in Israel. Aaron Antonovsky's brilliant book *Health, Stress, and Coping* (1979) has already begun to stimulate research efforts on the part of sociologists, psychologists, and physicians in all parts of the world. His insights into stress and its relationship to health preservation could, in the long run, contribute greatly to creating a less diseased human population throughout our planet.

In the terminology proposed by Antonovsky,



## ANTONOVSKY'S TERMINOLOGY



*stressors* are the things that "place a load on people." (By load he means "a demand made on one for which one does not have an automatic and readily available response capacity.") The strain experienced by the person a stressor acts upon is what he calls *tension*, and the strain that remains whenever that tension is not successfully overcome he labels *stress*. For example, continuous loud noise outside an open window is a stressor for people trying to engage in quiet conversation indoors. Tension is felt by those being affected by the noise. As a way of accomplishing what Antonovsky calls "tension management," one of them shuts the window tightly. Whether or not the noise is completely eliminated, the persons may remain in a state of strain for some time. It is this remaining element that persists after an effort is made to reduce the tension that he calls stress.

Probably the most valuable concept that Antonovsky presents in relation to tension management and the preservation of health is what he terms a *sense of coherence*. In general, he maintains that the stronger a person's sense of coherence is as he faces the realities that influence him from without and from within, the more successfully will he be able to manage tension and reduce the level of stress and disease in his life. Describing this sense as a "generalized, long-lasting way of seeing the world and one's life in it," Antonovsky regards it as a way of perceiving that involves both cognitive and affective components and is developed as a crucial element in an individual's basic personality structure. A sense of coherence is shaped by life experiences from the time of birth onward. Antonovsky observes, "we constantly go through situations of challenge and response, stress, tension, and resolution. The more these experiences

are characterized by consistency, participation in shaping outcome, and an underload-overload balance of stimuli,\* the more we begin to see the world as being coherent and predictable." This sense of coherence is tentatively formed in childhood; it becomes definitive in adolescence and young adulthood. The adolescent has greater options than the child does in choosing or encountering experiences that strengthen or weaken this characteristic. In adulthood, the person selects and interprets experiences to conform to the established level of his sense of coherence, which can still be modified, although usually not radically (short of an encounter with a truly cataclysmic stressor such as sudden widowhood, loss of employment, war, or a natural disaster).

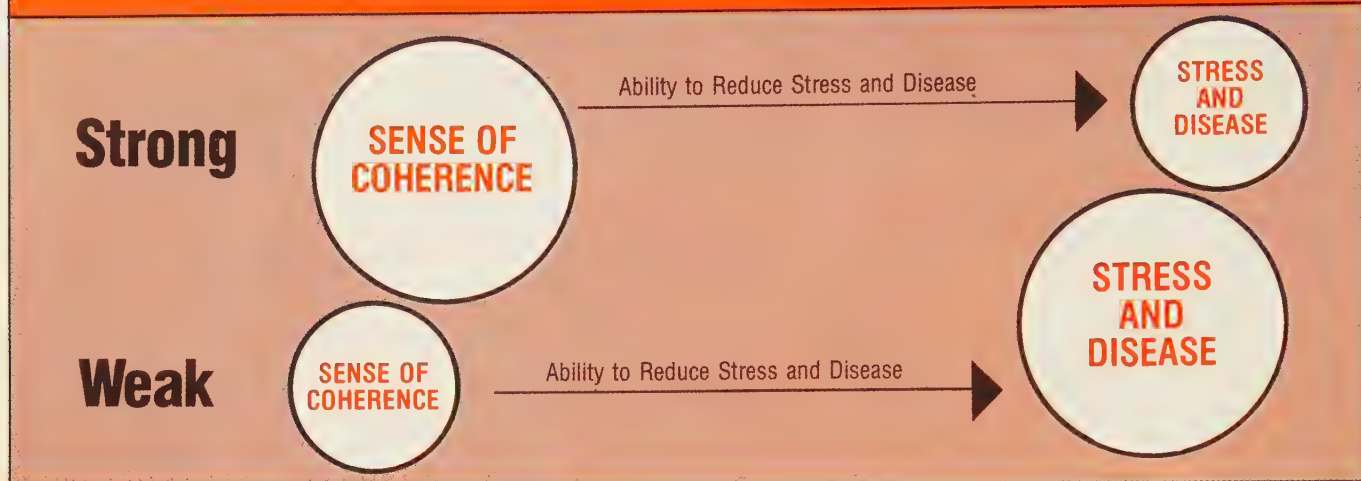
### CONCEPT FURTHER CLARIFIED

Antonovsky provides an even clearer description when he states: "A sense of coherence is a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring, though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected." He points out that persons in whom this quality is strongly developed tend to remain in situations that keep it strong, whereas those with a weak sense of coherence tend to choose situations that reinforce that low level. A person with a stronger sense automatically seeks to

\* Stimulation is neither too strong nor too weak for the person's well-being.



## ANTONOVSKY'S STRESS AND HEALTH INSIGHT



change the areas in his life that threaten to weaken it; the one with a weaker sense makes no such efforts since he lacks hopefulness and anticipates that things are generally likely to go wrong. The individual with a stronger sense of coherence is also able to face reality and “judge the likelihood of desirable outcomes in view of the countervailing forces operative in all of life.” But he is not a person who is confident to an excessive degree. Rather, he is simply hopeful that things will work out in the long run “as well as can reasonably be expected.” Explaining this point further, Antonovsky says, “Life may well be seen as full of complexities, conflicts, and complications—which one understands. Good achievement may be seen as contingent on an immense investment of effort. Moreover, one may be fully aware that life involves failure and frustration. The important thing is that one has a sense of confidence, of faith, that, by and large, things will work out well.” Having a strong sense of coherence does not imply that a person feels that he is in control of the outcome of his endeavors. What is essential is that he perceives himself as being a participant in the process of shaping his destiny as well as his daily experience. What troubles many people who are dismayed by the glaring and alarming array of negative aspects of our civilization is the apparent unrelatedness, the absence of coherence, in so many things that are happening. A plane is hijacked and hostages are held in Syria. In El Salvador a civil war erupts. In Italy a labor leader is gunned down in the street. A war starts between Iran and Iraq, another in Lebanon. Children are starving in Somalia. Hundreds of thousands are homeless and stagnating along the Thai-Cambodia

border. Polish laborers attract military invasion by the Soviet Union. A young man fires at the president, nearly ending the president's life. American bases are being established in the Middle East. New atomic weaponry and delivery systems are being designed. The space shuttle flies. Quality of education in public schools is declining. Seminaries and convents have fewer and fewer applicants. Divorce rates rise. And on and on and on. How is it possible to find the big picture of our world comprehensible—to somehow make sense of it all? Antonovsky is saying, in effect, that if a person cannot find a way to perceive his world as intelligible, his good health will not survive long. Nor will it last if he feels that no matter what attempts he makes to counter the negative forces or to enhance the positive impact of the world's influence on him, he lacks any real power to do so.

### GENERALIZED RESISTANCE RESOURCES

But what about the possibility of simply giving up trying to make sense out of our world and the complex forces that are currently shaping its trajectory? For the sake of their physical health and sanity, wouldn't it be wise to advise people to turn off their TV sets when news programs come on, to stop reading newspaper columns about all the things that are going wrong with our world, and to banish the disturbing images of Somalia, Cambodia, Northern Ireland, Iran, and Moscow from their minds? No, it wouldn't—at least not if they are going to remain Christian. People in distress around the globe are our brothers and sisters; their plight is our own. If we are going to act in a Chris-



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## People in distress around the globe are our brothers and sisters; their plight is our own.

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tian way and, as St. Paul required, “make each other’s well-being our common concern,” we can’t turn our back on the people who desperately need our attention and helpful response. So, the problem remains: we must find some coherence in our world view in order to keep our existential stress to a tolerable minimum and thus preserve our God-given health and sanity.

Antonovsky states that a strong sense of coherence (if we can develop and maintain one) virtually guarantees our preserving ourselves for a point he calls the *ease* end—the opposite of *dis-ease*—along the “health continuum.” He prefers to regard health as a continuum rather than as a condition contrary to illness since everyone at all times manifests some degree of health; no one is either ill or healthy in every part of his body at any given moment. But, as the means to ease, the comprehensibility of our environment and the predictability we perceive through our sense of coherence are dependent on our developing an array of assets to deal with our stressors. Antonovsky calls these our generalized resistance resources (GRRs), defining a GRR as “any characteristic of the person, the group or the environment that can facilitate effective tension management.”\* Making obvious the connection between all GRRs and the sense of coherence to which they contribute, he describes

(in ponderous fashion) a GRR as “a physical, biochemical, artifactual-material, cognitive, emotional, evaluative-attitudinal, interpersonal-relational or macrosociocultural characteristic, phenomenon, or relationship of an individual, primary group, subculture, society that provides extended and continued experience in making sense of the countless stimuli with which one is constantly bombarded and facilitates the perception that the stimuli one transmits are being received by the intended recipients without distortion.”

### RESOURCES EXEMPLIFIED

As implied in this definition, there are at least eight different types of GRRs, all of which facilitate dealing with and overcoming stressors. These include:

(1) Preventive Health Orientation. Certain kinds of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors result in the avoidance of exposure to stressors. For example, being vaccinated against polio, undergoing a routine medical checkup, refraining from smoking, and eating a balanced diet.

(2) Physical and Biochemical. The human body has a built-in surveillance function, scientifically referred to as an immune mechanism, that keeps it ready to destroy invading organisms, substances, or cells that may threaten survival.

### Some Types of Generalized Resistance Resources (GRRs) Promoting a “Sense of Coherence”

- ☐ Preventive health orientation
- ☐ Physical and biochemical
- ☐ Material
- ☐ Emotional (sense of ego-identity)
- ☐ Coping strategy
- ☐ Social supports
- ☐ Culture (religion)

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\* Antonovsky distinguishes a GRR from an SRR (specific resistance resource), which is an action a person finds useful to cope with a particular situation of tension. It could be a certain drug, a telephone lifeline, a squeeze of the hand, etc.



(3) Material. Such things as money, physical strength, shelter, clothing, and adequate food can provide resistance to stressors. For example, money makes it possible to buy medicines or to vacation in a warm climate to avoid winter's cold.

(4) Cognitive. Education can provide a storehouse of information about smoking and cancer data, the relationship between cholesterol and heart attacks, what medical facilities exist in a given city or town, the rights of a hospitalized patient, and so forth. (I certainly do not intend to imply that everyone who has knowledge or knows how to get knowledge that will decrease stress and illness will put this information or ability into practice. Millions of individuals who know the value of daily physical exercise, drinking alcohol moderately, or maintaining normal weight are annually making pledges to themselves to use this knowledge for their own well-being but never get around to doing so.)

(5) Emotional. A person's ego identity is the sense he has of his own inner self as being real, acceptable, integrated, and stable but at the same time dynamic and flexible. It enables an individual to perceive himself as related to social and cultural reality while maintaining his independence. This sense of meaningful identity is not simply an end product of a successfully accomplished adolescence; it is, as Erik Erikson has explained, a "lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society . . . an evolving configuration . . . that is gradually established by successive ego syntheses and resyntheses." The task of forming an ego identity involves integrating one's physical constitution, personal needs and yearnings, special capacities, adopted qualities, defenses, and roles.

(6) Coping Strategy. We all have a tendency to work out for ourselves typical ways in which we can deal with the various stressors that confront us. These make up our coping strategy, an overall plan of action we form, usually unconsciously, to preserve our well-being. The more rational our plan is (accurately and objectively assessing the extent to which a stressor is really a threat), the more flexible it is (open to constant evaluation, new information, and revision), and the more farsighted it is (anticipating the response of our inner and outer environments to the actions of our strategy proposes), the more effective it will be as a GRR. An example of such a strategy would be, as the Jews in Old Testament times were taught, to be aggressive whenever assaulted, "an eye for an eye." Or, as Jesus Christ in the New Testament instructed his followers, to be less assertive in those same circumstances and "turn the other cheek."

(7) Social Supports. This is the GRR of "deep, immediate, and interpersonal roots." Being embedded in social networks to which one is committed is a crucial resource. But for commitment to serve as such, the other people in a network must be reciprocally committed. Those related closely to

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others through marriage, friendship, church membership, and group associations have demonstrated to scientific researches that individuals with many need-satisfying social contacts have the lowest mortality. It has been found, for example, that being married provides health protection, for men even more than for women, and especially against causes of death in which a person's psychological state plays either a direct or an indirect role (such as in accidents or alcoholism).

(8) Religion. Long ago the renowned sociologist Bronislaw Malinowski pointed out that our culture provides us our place in the world (our language, roles, norms, and a world in which to fit) and an extraordinarily wide range of answers to life's questions. Religion, as an element within our culture, makes just such a contribution. Malinowski wrote, "Religious belief and ritual, by making the critical acts and the social contracts of human life public, traditionally standardized and subject to supernatural sanctions, strengthens the bonds of human cohesion." Our religion helps make sense of the world, its events, and our place in it; it also takes away feelings of impotence, especially through belief in the power of intercessory prayer and charitable works. Antonovsky asserts that "Ready answers provided by one's culture and its social structures are probably the most powerful GRR of all."

## **RESOURCES PROMOTE COHERENCE**

The eight GRRs above are some of the major resources that together provide us with a strong sense of coherence and, as Antonovsky observes, "allow



us to see our internal and external environments as meaningful, predictable and ordered” and at the same time enable us to “reasonably hope that we can emerge victorious much of the time, though not necessarily in every encounter.” A person who is markedly deficient in GRRs is generally one who lacks hopefulness and is inclined to give up trying to comprehend his world and himself and to effect desirable outcomes. George Engel and his medical research colleagues reported that this “giving up process was found to be an antecedent to diseases of all categories, from infections and metabolic and those of degenerative and neoplastic (tumor) origin in the medical group and from acute brain syndromes and schizophrenic reactions to psychoneurotic disorders and clinical syndromes of depression in the psychiatric group.” In other words, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness tend to contribute to illness, just as an attitude of hopefulness is associated with and contributes to the maintaining or regaining of good health.

### TOFFLER'S WORLD VIEW

Studies of culture-shocked immigrants to our country by New York sociologists Lawrence E. Hinkle and Harold Wolff revealed that “the healthiest members of the group are those who were able to tolerate with some ease such recurrent disruptions of their life patterns partly because they regard such changes and disruptions as a normal and expected part of a life pattern.” This finding suggests that recently published books, such as *The Third Wave* by Alvin Toffler, could prove helpful to readers by making it clear, as Toffler did in *Future Shock*, that relentless and pervasive change is occurring everywhere, will not abate until a new civilization exists, and is straining both people and systems to the breaking point. He writes in *The Third Wave*: “We find crisis in the welfare systems. Crisis in the health delivery systems. Crisis in the urban systems. Crisis in the international financial system. The nation-state itself is in crisis.” To cope with these crises and the changes that are taking place, Toffler believes that “we are left with only one option. We must be willing to reshape ourselves and our institutions.” The major problem for people living through this age of transition is, from Toffler’s vantage point, “to maintain a sense of self and the ability to manage our lives through the intensifying crises that lie ahead.” Fortunately, he finds in the midst of the turmoil we are experiencing “a growing coherence of pattern.” The pattern he describes is one that gives a fair degree of comprehensibility to the world scene we are witnessing, and he provides broad suggestions on ways in which we can individually make decisions that will give shape to our lives and to our world so as to not end up passive victims of the transformation that is already engulfing us. In other words, he is providing help for us in the direction of maintaining our

sense of coherence. The education he and other secular, future-oriented observers are furnishing on the signs of our times helps us realize what kind of intellectual work we need to do if we are to avoid being overwhelmed by what I earlier called existential stress. We need, with the help of Toffler and with the help theology can provide, to make some sense out of what is happening in our world and to find some way to shape it constructively. Our sanity, our health, and our survival depend on our success in doing so.

### STRESS REDUCTION REQUIRES WILL

In this article we have looked at two ways stress can occur: as a result of immediate threats and frustrations that affect us as individuals, and as a result of the disturbing circumstances that surround and impact on us all. We took notice of a number of ways that people have learned to hold down the stress in their lives by resorting to SRRs. We also examined Antonovsky’s valuable concept, the sense of coherence, which is so intimately related to the maintenance of good health, and we saw that this characteristic of persons or groups is sustained through the development of GRRs, eight of which we examined briefly. Finally, we noted that books like *The Third Wave*, which attempt to render comprehensible the world in which we live and the times through which we are passing and which suggest ways we can avoid depressing feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, can make a strong educational contribution to the maintenance of our sense of coherence, health, and sanity.

Still, success in preventing or decreasing stress and stress-related illness depends on more than just knowing what needs to be done. It requires the exercise of a human faculty not frequently emphasized in the literature of behavioral sciences during recent years. I’m referring, of course, to the will. (It is hard to believe that 22 years have passed since Rollo May published his classic *Love and Will*). People must actively use their will to cut down the stress in their lives by employing tension-reducing techniques or by building up GRRs, or else it’s not going to happen. Without using their will, people won’t succeed in deliberately avoiding the stressors that are about to frustrate or threaten them; they won’t change their perceptions of persons, events, or situations so as to accept them with tranquility rather than reacting to them with resentment, hostility, or fear; they won’t use the means of relaxing at the proper times; they won’t develop their GRRs by enriching their own array of resources or that of the society in which they reside; and they won’t strengthen their sense of coherence by striving to understand their world, themselves, and their capabilities better.

Unfortunately, the society in which we live gives most individuals relatively little encouragement to perform these tasks. It’s true that we see the exam-



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ple of some faithful joggers, some successful weight reducers, some who perseveringly display a temperate use of alcohol, and there are a lot of books on the subject of stress available throughout the country. But ours is predominantly a permissive society, a tolerant and accepting one; it is not the kind that holds up wise norms for healthful behavior or finds a way to reward people for observing them or makes those whose conduct involves self-harm regret their choice of action.

Even our higher-education institutions, our colleges and universities, have placed little emphasis on the development of will. Students acknowledge that their minds are full of possible life choices, but they find it difficult to commit themselves, especially to any task or relationship that would be long-term. They are good at discussing reasons pro and con but are reluctant to make firm decisions—to run the risk of succeeding or of tasting failure; of feeling satisfied or of being disappointed; of finding themselves competent or of discovering they are incompetent. The practice of “doing one’s own thing” and consistently choosing the route of instant, effortless, and painless gratification will never produce a person who knows what he wants, seeks and finds the means to achieve it, assumes responsibility for the outcome,

and puts his heart and soul into the effort to live up to his commitment. Yet this describes precisely the type of person who day in and day out experiences a sense of being fully alive.

The person who succeeds in living healthfully is one who decides what he has to do to cope with the stresses his environment produces and who resists the enticements that would lead him to neglect his well-being. He is one who has learned to say no to those who through advertising, promises of enjoyment, and the like encourage a life of hedonism and the foregoing of any long-term goals that require sacrifice. To turn down an offer of a cigarette, a drink, drugs, sex, or a fast buck calls for *will*, and as everyone knows, will power is developed only through exercise—repeated until a habit is established and the decision, as a result becomes somewhat easier to make. To become a person with a maturely developed will, an individual must deliberately take responsibility for acting in the way he ideally wants to act and for not behaving in a manner that would differ from this ideal. This calls for commitment to a rational rather than a predominantly emotional and impulsive style of life and demands that choices be made along those lines hour after hour, day after day.

Only a rationally lived life can be a truly healthy one. It takes intelligence and will for an adult to use the requisite means to keep mind and body at their best, to cope with the stresses that bring on disease, to develop GRRs and maintain a sense of coherence. It takes the same qualities to live faithfully a life of loving service to others. So when asking the Lord in prayer to give us the health of mind and body that will enable us to live such a life, we’d better ask him to help us sharpen our mind and strengthen our will. You don’t cope with stress and preserve your health by chance in today’s world. It’s done only with purpose—strong and steady application of will.

#### **RECOMMENDED READINGS**

- Adams, John. *Understanding and Managing Stress*. San Diego: University Associates, Inc., 1980.
- Antonovsky, Aaron. *Health, Stress and Coping*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1979.
- Kutash, Irwin; Schlesinger, Louis. *Handbook on Stress and Anxiety*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1980.
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- Toffler, Alvin. *The Third Wave*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1980.



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# WORLDWIDE JESUIT FORMATION

## Interview with Cecil McGarry, S.J.

**D**uring the course of a workshop recently conducted by the editorial staff of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, we were able to sit down with Father Cecil McGarry, who had just returned to the Jesuit Generalate in the Eternal City after an extensive tour of Jesuit formation houses abroad. His role as General Assistant to Father Pedro Arrupe, S.J., entails supervising the formation of Jesuits all over the world. We are deeply grateful to him for giving our readers this chance to see how the Society of Jesus is developing its men for the ministries of the future and to compare this program with those followed in the congregations to which our readers belong.

**HD:** Father McGarry, what's the nature of the work you do within the Society of Jesus?

**McGarry:** I'm General Assistant, so my concern is with the whole Society and all its works, but I am particularly responsible for the area of religious formation. Basically, that means that I try to keep track of what's going on in different places; I handle all matters dealing with formation when they come here to the Jesuit Curia. I'm also Father General's advisor on formation issues. For example, I helped Father Arrupe with his recently published norms for studies and with his instructions on preparing for ordination to the priesthood.

**HD:** In general, what is the scope of your work in formation?

**McGarry:** It includes everything from novitiate through tertianship and all that pertains to Jesuit studies and religious development.

**HD:** This doesn't include what is called continuing, or lifelong, formation?

**McGarry:** No. Another Jesuit here at the Curia looks after that. I work for our younger men from the time they enter the order until they make their final profession.

**HD:** How long have you been doing this?

**McGarry:** For about six years now.

**HD:** And you came here to Rome after being Provincial of the Jesuits in Ireland—for how long?

**McGarry:** I held that office for about 6½ years.

**HD:** And before that?

**McGarry:** I was teaching theology—ecclesiology, to be exact—and served as rector of our house of studies at Milltown Park in Dublin.

**HD:** Have you found your own theological studies and teaching experience useful in your work in religious formation?

**McGarry:** I have. My understanding of what the Church is and where it is going today has been helped greatly as a result of this background. I think that a knowledge of ecclesiology is of considerable benefit to anyone doing formation work. We can't run a formation program apart from the Church's mission; it would have no meaning. I believe that those who form our young people for religious life should have as much theological understanding as they can, including a vision of what the Church is about, what the Kingdom of God is about, and what our mission in the world is.

**HD:** What other preparation do you recommend for people going into formation work?

**McGarry:** I think those who are going to help give shape to the lives, attitudes, and ministry of the young should themselves have a solid experience in ministry within the Church today. A preparation for formation work that involves only theory is not enough; an academic degree without practical experience in ministry is simply inadequate. For instance, I think it is very important that a person chosen to be director of novices should have engaged in ministerial or apostolic work so that he can be seen as a model—as somebody who has been



in the front lines and has been at least somewhat successful.

**HD:** What type of ministerial experience would you want a director of novices to have?

**McGarry:** A good deal of direct contact with lay people of different kinds, those who are well educated as well as those who are more simple. He should have really communicated the gospel message in one way or another. But I would say the very same thing for seminary teachers of philosophy and theology. If they haven't had this experience it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to enter into the convictions that young people have today—that what they learn should be preparing them to be effective in ministry. If a person has this experience of what ministry requires, I believe he can communicate with the young much more credibly and successfully. By being pastorally oriented, he can focus his intellectual formation work much more helpfully.

**HD:** Do you think that most young Jesuits being trained for priesthood today are more pastorally than academically oriented?

**McGarry:** I would say they are very pastorally oriented, much more than men of my generation were. But I wouldn't say that they are not intellectually oriented; they are, but in quite a different way from what we saw in former times. In the Society of Jesus in the past, we had an idea that the intellectual who taught, did research, or worked in his study was doing something truly significant for the Church, but today our young people are interested in acquiring a deep intellectual formation so that they can use it in very direct ways to meet the needs of God's people. They realize that in many areas the Church is faced with new problems and pleads for new solutions; they see that our intellectual work must be more concerned with finding answers for people than in presenting an abstract understanding of some philosophical position or Church doctrine.

**HD:** Are you doing anything about enriching the background of Jesuits already teaching philosophy or theology to seminarians without having had front-line experience in pastoral ministry?

**McGarry:** I find most Jesuit provinces now strongly encouraging their seminary teachers to engage in apostolic work, if at all possible, together with their students. When they face pastoral problems together while sharing a ministry, their relationship in the classroom becomes much closer and educationally as well as formationally more efficacious.

**HD:** Can you give an example of such a situation?

**McGarry:** I've just come back from Mexico where I found that practically all of the teachers are engaged at a deep level of commitment in apostolic

work, very often in collaboration with our seminarians. They are involved together, for example, in building up basic Christian communities, in serving parishes, and in investigating social and political problems in the barrios. I found this collaboration strikingly fruitful. But it's not always easy to get older professors to engage in work outside the seminary; they haven't been prepared for it. On the other hand, young men who are becoming professors today generally find it quite natural to make pastoral work an ongoing part of their lives. They were involved in ministry during their years of study, and they usually want to continue this work even when they are teaching.

**HD:** How did it happen that many, if not most, seminary professors in the past remained personally uninvolved in pastoral work?

**McGarry:** I think we saw philosophy and theology as bodies of knowledge seminarians needed to learn in order to be prepared for their life's work. We were living in a fairly static time and in a world where there wasn't a great deal of change. There weren't the pressures of new problems and serious questions as there are today. Without such pressures upon them, our teachers, who deeply understood the Church's doctrine, felt called by God to transmit their knowledge to young men preparing for apostolic work. But that simply isn't the situation any longer. Today, for the first time, there are no fixed and perennial answers to questions being asked and problems being faced.

**HD:** And to get in touch with those new problems and questions, a man has to be somehow engaged in front-line action?

**McGarry:** I think it's a great help. But I believe there is still a place among our teachers for men who understand the depths of the Church's traditions and who can communicate to our seminarians what they know. Perhaps we are committing the opposite fault today—going to the other extreme and being too pragmatic and too eclectic in our teaching, attempting to deal only with problems of the moment. There is pressure from our students in that direction; everything has to be immediately relevant. I think it is also important to convey the wisdom the Church and philosophers have developed and treasured through the centuries, so I still see a place on our faculties for teachers who are not involved in front-line apostolic activity or in grappling with the problems of the hour.

**HD:** This sounds a little like the field of science, in which some individuals are dealing with applied science—a task that has immediate appeal—but others are needed to do the basic research, which is usually accomplished without immediate gratification in some quiet place that's remote from the front lines.



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anthropology,  
psychology, and  
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sciences are  
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meditations.**

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**McGarry:** Exactly. And speaking of science, I think preparation in the human and social sciences is very important today. I think anthropology, psychology, and the social sciences are almost essential mediations, along with theology and philosophy, for understanding and preaching the faith in a way they were not a quarter of a century ago. Or at least we didn't see the need.

**HD:** Are Jesuits who are going into seminary formation work studying these sciences?

**McGarry:** I would say somewhat, but in many cases not sufficiently. The demands of doctoral studies in philosophy and theology are so great that it's very hard for a man to study the human social sciences at the same time. But very often our younger teachers have been at least introduced to these subjects in the course of their earlier studies, and they can keep reading in these areas later on.

**HD:** Do all Jesuits being trained for priesthood today study psychology, sociology, and anthropology?

**McGarry:** Generally, yes. And in the Society's new norms for studies, we have insisted that they do so.

**HD:** These norms apply just to the academic preparation of Jesuit priests?

**McGarry:** Yes. But we have suggested that men teaching philosophy and theology outside our own houses of study could very well be guided by these too.

**HD:** As you travel around the world these days,

what are you seeing in the novitiates that impresses you?

**McGarry:** I suppose the first thing that impresses me is the emphasis provincial superiors and novitiate staffs put on knowing the family of a candidate before the young man is accepted for admission as well as on staying in touch with the family, both before and after entrance, in order to nourish his vocation.

**HD:** Are you finding advances being made in selecting men more likely to persevere and excluding those who are more likely to experience insurmountable problems?

**McGarry:** It's true that we are selecting more carefully than we formerly did, but we still need to find ways to contact and keep an eye on candidates for a significant period of time before they are admitted. We need more Christian life communities, more prayer groups, and a more person-oriented campus ministry.

**HD:** Are you recruiting most candidates from Jesuit schools and other religious institutions?

**McGarry:** No, we're not. We still draw a good number from universities, colleges, and high schools in the United States, but in other parts of the world we tend to attract a good number of our vocations from a different source. For instance, in Third World countries, where we work more among the poor and are clearly seen as being on the side of justice and human rights, we tend to find an increasing number of Jesuit vocations among the rather poor people with whom we are working. These are young men who have grown up in quite a different tradition from what the Society is generally used to.

**HD:** This, I suppose, presents some special problems in their religious formation.

**McGarry:** It does in the sense that very often their human, spiritual, and intellectual development has been poor in their early years. The Society has been accustomed to receiving candidates with a strong educational background. This is not true of many of these new Third World people. Obviously, it means that we have to attend very carefully to our method of formation, both before and after their admission to our novitiates. Formation has to be highly individualized, since there is very little homogeneity among these Third World candidates.

**HD:** Do you find vocations coming from among the poor, or lower socioeconomic classes, in the more developed countries?

**McGarry:** Yes. For example, in the United States they come from among the less fortunate segments of the Hispanic and black communities—but the Church needs to develop a new pastoral approach among these people if we are going to draw any large number from this source.



**HD:** Are you satisfied with the number of young men coming into Jesuit novitiates at the present time?

**McGarry:** Not if we measure in terms of our being able to continue the apostolic works the Society is currently doing. On the basis of our present numbers, it is going to be necessary for us to redimension the works of almost all our provinces. I would be more satisfied with the number of novices in many places if our selection process were better, if fewer were leaving the Society during their early years, and if a larger percentage were remaining past ordination, or final vows if we're talking about brothers.

**HD:** Has the Society already begun to trim down the scope of its enterprises in proportion to the diminished number of men coming in, or are we going to reach a point in time when the lopping off must begin?

**McGarry:** You've touched one of my greatest concerns in relation to my contact with the formation sector of the Society. I think our difficulty in facing the reality of our future manpower, in making choices about our apostolic orientations, and in redimensioning our existing works is at the present time one of the strongest negative influences on formation. In provinces where our men are not facing these issues, I'm finding a great deal of uncertainty, questioning, and soul searching among our scholastics. They wonder what they are being prepared for, whether the Society is clear about its future ventures, and what it is going to expect and ask of them. In many provinces we are engaged in forms of ministry that our young people do not consider important or feel are not being carried out in the way ministries should be. Our young men wonder whether they are going to be assigned to these works rather than to those they view as more valuable for the future. At times our inexperienced scholastics make their evaluations much too quickly, but more often it is the province's failure to plan its future that impairs the formation process.

**HD:** How precise must a province's apostolic planning be?

**McGarry:** I think it should include a choice of the main lines along which the province is going to work but not necessarily the shape of institutions or concrete forms of apostolic work. I'm talking about the ability of a province to decide that, say, A, B, and C are general areas in which we want to work, without necessarily deciding the specific forms of that work. When such options are spelled out clearly, I find that the formation sector is healthy and vigorous, the morale of the scholastics is high, and they have a vision to which they can commit themselves. When such a plan is lacking there can be a great deal of confusion, questioning, and difficulty in the formation sector.

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**Spiritual direction  
is no longer  
considered to be  
something very  
special or exotic; it's  
a very normal part  
of a Jesuit's life.**

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**HD:** Are there still many Jesuit provinces where this type of planning has not yet been done?

**McGarry:** I believe there are. But Father General [Pedro Arrupe, S.J.] has made a strong plea to all of our provincials and provinces to go to work seriously and decide upon their apostolic options. He encouraged them to face up to the changed manpower situation in their province as well as to the Church's changed pastoral approach. The laity must be given a much bigger part in the Church's mission, so we need to decide just what we should be doing and how we can best facilitate the work that lay people can do and then cooperate with them.

**HD:** You're saying, then, that an effective formation program is closely related to a realistically developed apostolic plan for the province, is that right?

**McGarry:** I think there is a very close link between the two, and that when there is good planning—especially when all the men in the province are involved, including the young people—there is likely to be a healthy formation sector and much greater unity of purpose in the province. I have no doubt about this; I've learned it from experience; it is not just theory.

**HD:** Do you see any new trends in the formation of novices today?

**McGarry:** I would say that today, more so than 15 or 20 years ago, we consider apostolic experience for novices to be an integral part of their spiritual, intellectual, and human formation. On the other hand, there is need for a great deal more basic in-



struction, because the schooling of many has been much weaker and their formation in faith—at least in the doctrinal part of it—is less advanced than in former times. What we are especially trying to provide during the two novitiate years is an opportunity for our young men to develop a life of prayer and contemplation—nourished by a 30-day retreat (*The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*)—that can serve to energize the apostolic experiences in which they are engaging as a foretaste of their life in active ministry during the years ahead.

**HD:** What are some of the types of experience in which Jesuit novices are engaged?

**McGarry:** They are quite varied. As one example, almost every novitiate provides an opportunity for novices to serve in a hospital, where many of them have their first intimate contact with human suffering, death, despair, and remarkable demonstrations of faith. They learn to face up to the problems that sickness can bring. The experience of washing, dressing, and caring for the sick gives the novice a chance to test just how willing he is to do simple, unattractive work, as well as to get involved in patients' problems. Some novices have a chance to work in factories or in agricultural areas, again to share the experience of people—the monotony, the boredom, the difficult toiling that characterizes their lives. This, too, is a testing, a way of bringing the novice's spiritual ideals down to reality. So is the work they do in parishes, in basic Christian communities, or in catechetical or youth centers.

**HD:** When the young man has completed his novitiate years and, after taking vows, enters a prolonged period of academic training, do you find that his enthusiasm for spiritual growth usually subsides as he pours his energies into pursuing academic goals and degrees?

**McGarry:** That can easily happen, but the way we have been trying to prevent it, at least during the past five or six years, is by requiring that for about two years after finishing novitiate training, every man will live in a type of community especially designed to care for men at this stage. We try to provide a carefully chosen superior, an excellent spiritual director, and seminars or courses on Ignatian spirituality, apart from the studies in which they are engaged.

**HD:** And do young Jesuits still spend three of their preordination years teaching in a Jesuit high school, college, or university?

**McGarry:** For a while, after the Society's 31st General Congregation, which ended in 1965, we were emphasizing new apostolic experiments and attempting to shorten the course of preparation for priesthood, so the teaching experience was allowed to fade in some places. But recently we have come to recognize that it is important for our men to spend a year or two, usually before studying theol-

ogy and ordination, either teaching or working in a parish, social institute, or some other setting in which they can break away from their studies and see whether they are capable of carrying direct apostolic responsibility. Teaching is still the most common experience of this sort.

**HD:** But no longer for three years?

**McGarry:** As a general rule, I would say that it's more likely to be two years, sometimes one. Today many men are entering the order in their mid-20s, which makes us want to shorten the formation years while still preserving their effectiveness. But while they are engaged in this formative experience, we want them to live outside of what we call formation communities and really get inserted into the apostolic body of the Society. We arrange for them to live and work shoulder-to-shoulder with older and more experienced Jesuits. This is important for them and for the renewal of the Society as well. If these young men were to live apart from our ordinary communities, there would be loss on both sides. They would not get to know the real Society, and men who have been formed in years past wouldn't get a chance to come into contact with new ways of thinking, praying, and living the Jesuit life.

**HD:** Is it difficult to find older Jesuits to serve as spiritual directors and on formation staffs in houses of studies these days?

**McGarry:** Not the way it used to be. Spiritual direction is no longer considered to be something very special or exotic; it's a very normal part of a Jesuit's life and a relationship that Jesuits find easy to arrange with one another. But I think it's easier for older Jesuits to develop the skills of a spiritual director than those of a formation team member. Not everyone has the combination of human, spiritual, and intellectual qualities or the stamina to live with young people year after year. It's very demanding; young people constantly question, and they're dealing with personal difficulties that the older men solved for themselves many years ago. Another aspect of the problem we have in finding formation personnel is that we are looking among a generation that suffered a great deal. We lost a large percentage of the men who would now be in their late thirties or early forties. When so many were struggling and dropping out, the formation experience was painful for most men of that generation who are still in the Society. They aren't easily enticed back into the formation sector to help guide the formation of others.

**HD:** Are there people outside the Society engaged in the formation of Jesuits?

**McGarry:** There are others, including women, who are contributing to the development of our young men, but usually in an informal way. For instance, I think the kind of contact that today's Jesuit



scholastics have with lay women and men, along with sisters, as collaborators in ministry can be very formative. Parish teams provide an excellent opportunity for this to occur. In such a situation young Jesuits can be better known and more directly confronted by their co-workers than they usually are in a college or university.

**HD:** Is there much cooperation from house to house or institution to institution among Jesuits engaged in formation work?

**McGarry:** I think this has increased and improved greatly over the years. Our institutions used to be very isolated; now there is collaboration among seminaries at every level. No year would go by without some meetings of deans, rectors, and others. Also, there are regular meetings for the directors of novices, tertians, and other formation personnel. These generally prove to be extremely helpful, especially to new men in this ministry. Our men also collaborate with people at other theological colleges, both Catholic and Protestant, and this has been very beneficial too. There is a great deal of cooperation among formation personnel from different orders and congregations of men and women. But I notice something going on that I'm not satisfied with now. Many congregations look to the Society of Jesus for advice because of its size and experience. I think we give a lot of advice, but I don't think we listen enough. I've become aware of this in myself. People from other general curias here in Rome invite me to talk with them about my experience in the area of formation. But I haven't been going out often enough with other people and asking them to share their experience with me and the Society.

**HD:** What kinds of things do other formation people ask you about?

**McGarry:** They usually want to hear about our approach to religious formation, our course of studies and institutions, and how we plan novitiate, pre-novitiate, and postnovitiate programs. But I should be asking questions as well as responding to those of others. I think that particularly the sisters have a lot of imagination, and they have created a variety of innovative formation programs we should be learning from. I also think that certain congregations of men that are engaged in special areas of apostolate have developed interesting orientations in their formation programs from which we could learn much.

**HD:** Is there any periodical or bulletin that keeps you informed about what is being attempted and accomplished in the formation programs of other religious orders and congregations?

**McGarry:** We receive the reports on the meetings of the Union of Superiors General (composed of men) and the International Union of Superiors General (composed of women), and these some-

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times bring useful news through their formation committees. But there is nothing formally published regarding the formation area. Here in Rome we have meetings now and then for the staff members of general curias, and we had a three-day session about two years ago on the subject of formation, which I found very valuable. And I think your own new journal, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, will be of great help to people in the religious development side of formation.

**HD:** What's going to be crucial, if *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* is to attain its aim, is for people who are trying new things in their formation programs to write about the outcome of their experiments, so that they can be published and shared with others. The alternative would be for us to move around the globe exploring what is happening, but since we are trying to bring together the experience of religious people in widespread and diverse parts of the world, it would seem more feasible for those in the field to write and send us articles or letters to describe what they are doing, so that others reading our journal can benefit from their efforts.

**McGarry:** I think it would be very helpful to many, if people can do that. But I also think that you will have to—out of your own experience with religious—write about what is important in the area of religious and affective maturity. You can pose problems and challenge people through the pages of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. This will help, I think, to elicit their responses. I think formation personnel need an enormous amount of help. For instance, in the early years of religious formation the problem is to help people to develop toward a



simple, human, affective, religious maturity. I think this issue is provoking immense questions in novitiates because of a lack of clarity in the area of values. It is my impression that in many parts of the world some formation personnel are still reacting against the earlier authoritarianism of superiors and the rigidly imposed standards in formation. As a result, in the early years of formation there is not enough challenge to young people, and there is a lack of some of the minimal structures that would help them to grow. Furthermore, I don't find formation people demanding sufficient coherence from young religious—such as between the ideals they proclaim and the way they live. To me, that's a key to growth and maturity—not imposed from outside but constantly demanded from within. We just can't accept an idealism that doesn't descend in some form to practice.

During the last few years, many young people have asked me, "Why are our superiors afraid of us?" They feel that they can put pressure on their superiors and get whatever they want, and they themselves know that they don't always want what is best. They realize that as a group they can also exercise very subtle pressure on their formation personnel who, because of their past experiences, can be reluctant to take a stand. Personally, I believe they should be ready to take a stand and not be too permissive. There's too much fear, in some parts of the world, of using authority or of calling on young religious to make demands on themselves. I don't believe in imposing a lot of requirements from outside; I don't think that's formation. But I do think we can help people learn to challenge themselves more.

**HD:** Do you have a clear idea of what kind of Jesuit you are trying to form for the future?

**McGarry:** Despite our 32nd General Congregation's spelling out of what the Jesuit of the future should be, I think there is still some vagueness. All the people involved in formation share a view of what we would like to help our young people become. Our aim is theoretically clear, but I don't think we are always sufficiently clear on how this is to be achieved in practice. I believe there are still areas of great confusion. One is the relationship of a man's individual talents and graces with the ministries of the Society. Another is the relationship of discernment with mission and obedience. The confusion, as I see it, arises from the fact that the understanding of the people engaged in formation and of the young people being formed differs. I think we have real problems in this area. I also think that in the area of celibacy and in the way of living celibacy—the kind of friendships and the way these are expressed in a manner that's proper to celibate people—there is a lack of clarity in the minds of some of our young men today. Another area in which I think there's a problem is the understanding of what is a priestly and Jesuit way of

promoting justice. This is a very difficult question, and I think that even though we may be able to say things about it theoretically, we are not clear about how this should be lived and how we should go about forming our people.

There are some areas in which we have a good deal more work to do. I think the formation programs are improving all the time, but you and your journal, *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, could help us greatly. For instance, if you were able to get reports from people or to talk with people who are involved in formation, you could then give them and us further orientation through your printed discussions, reviews, articles, and suggestions. I think you could offer a great service.

**HD:** I appreciate your suggestions and we will certainly follow up on them, I promise you. But let me ask you a few questions about the final phase in a Jesuit's formal formation—tertianship. When does the man go through it?

**McGarry:** Ideally, it follows about three years of full-time involvement in ministry, after ordination and completion of the study of theology. Formerly, this final formation experience was scheduled to begin as soon as the priest graduated from his school of theology. But as I see it, the three-year period of ministry now required as a preparation for tertianship is a good idea for a number of reasons. First, it keeps tertianship from being seen as just another formal stage of training to be gotten through. Second, I think the years of ministry experience men bring into tertianship and the questions that arise during those years can be extremely important in challenging the meaning of their vocation; they are forced to decide how they are going to fulfill it and compelled to adopt positions on the crucial problems that exist today. Tertianship gives them a great opportunity to focus these questions and to struggle with their problems and look dispassionately at them in prayer, with their spiritual director, and with their Jesuit companions. I consider the communitarian aspect of tertianship extremely important. It enables them to seek answers and solutions with other men who have had similar problems and questions as well as similar ideals.

**HD:** Do Jesuit priests feel a need for the experience of tertianship?

**McGarry:** I think that more and more it's something that people feel the need for. But it can be hard for them to withdraw from the ministry in which they are engaged, to leave it for a sufficient time to make tertianship valuable. I think those who spend from six to nine months in a tertianship find it an extremely important event in their lives; those who invest a shorter time don't ever really get the full results, and they don't realize what they are missing. They derive some degree of benefit, of course, but not nearly as much as they would have from a much more extended period with more



profound reflection, more prayer, and perhaps apostolic experiences of a quite different type from what they are engaged in, as well as a deeper sense of belonging to an apostolic body with its own charism through a shared study of our history and more fundamental documents. All these would give them a much better chance to really take up a position with regard to their lives and their service to the Church.

**HD:** Are you implying that the order hasn't taken any official stand on the duration of tertianship?

**McGarry:** At the time of our last General Congregation in 1975, we still weren't sufficiently clear on the matter, so the congregation approved three or four different forms of tertianship. Since then we've become increasingly aware of the weakness of some of these forms, which don't provide enough time and don't give people enough distance from their ordinary lives. For example, when they have only two months during the summer—to which they often come tired after a busy year—there is hardly time to settle down to any serious work or to take distance from what's going to happen when they return to their work. Likewise, the time and conditions to create a good community can be lacking, and this is a great loss. From talking with many men who have made a longer tertianship, and from reading evaluations that have been submitted in recent years, I have little doubt about the merits of this form. While abbreviated tertianships have their value—six weeks or two months during two summers, with good spiritual direction during the intervening year—they cannot be compared in results with the experience of nearly a whole year.

**HD:** Contemporary psychology, as you know, suggests that the religious formation process is only going to have a successful outcome if the man is willing to take responsibility for his own development. This leaves the *formatores* in the position not of controlling but of facilitating that growth. Do you find that formation personnel are actually acting in an assisting rather than a directing way?

**McGarry:** In general, I think formation personnel throughout the Society of Jesus conceive their role in the development-fostering way. If I have any problem with this, it is that perhaps some are too passive. They may have gone a bit too far. It's true that the person who is called by God is the individual, the one who has to take responsibility is the individual; but the Society does have something to say about its way of life, does have values, does have traditions, and does have orientations presented by its general congregations. I think that we are sometimes—less now than we were years ago—too passive. We too readily let the men in formation tell us how their years of formation should be spent. As I said earlier, I would like to see more exigency on the part of formation personnel, not in imposing things, but in requiring that people

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live up to their responsibilities and challenging them to do so. I would want them to communicate clearly the standards and values we have and to challenge and help men to grow toward them. We have to be willing to say to a man at a certain stage, "Sorry, you don't measure up to what the Society demands," or "You've more to do to measure up." That may sound hard, but it's my conviction.

**HD:** During your years of association with formation work, is there any special impression you have gained from watching the process closely?

**McGarry:** A thing that always strikes me is the great dedication of our formation personnel. They really live for their work; they're totally devoted. It's very difficult work because of a lack of clarity about many of the dynamics of formation and even, at times, regarding the goals. These men have had to live and work through a period of many changes and pressures; I think they've been extraordinary in their service to the Society and the Church.

**HD:** How do the men being formed regard the people who are doing the forming?

**McGarry:** Generally with great admiration and affection, and this is the basis for a formative relationship. There's usually a real feeling of brotherhood and confidence. They are aware that these men are their friends, their brothers, and that their only desire is that they grow in the Lord. With very few exceptions, this situation prevails throughout the Society.

**HD:** What do you think about the future of the Jesuits?



**McGarry:** I don't know whether it's because I'm naturally optimistic, but I am extremely hopeful about the future. I won't mind if we have fewer Jesuits. I think the quality of our men is good, I think the quality of the formation process is good, and I think the commitment of our young people is good. So I can't help but have great confidence in the future.

**HD:** Are candidates for the Society different today from those in the past?

**McGarry:** I think the young men we accept into our novitiate are arriving with greater clarity about their vocations than, for instance, the generation that lived through the disturbances in the student world of the late '60s. I think we're doing a better job of forming them, too. We are much clearer than we were even six years ago in our formation criteria, principles, and ways of doing things. I think we're learning all the time to do a better job of supporting the development of the excellent young people God is sending us.

**HD:** How do you communicate to formation personnel all over the world your conclusions about the best ways to guide the formation process?

**McGarry:** I try to communicate what experience teaches by making visits to our 80 provinces and conversing with provincials, novice directors, rectors of formation houses, professors, and the scholastics. I try to share with them my knowledge of what is being tried and found useful in other places. I don't publish any bulletins or documents on a regular basis, since the variety of the formation experience arising out of remarkably different cultural situations makes general communication very difficult. It seems to me that I can speak to situations much better when I'm in them. Correspondence also affords ample opportunities.

**HD:** Has Father Arrupe written anything to the Society lately on the subject of religious formation?

**McGarry:** In 1968 he wrote a long document on spiritual and religious formation that is certainly valid today, although certain points could probably be revised. And just a year ago he issued the norms with regard to studies, in which he integrated other aspects of formation. In his own visits to provinces he regularly talks to groups of formation personnel and to scholastics on the subject of formation. His remarks to them are always mimeographed and sent from province to province throughout the Society.

**HD:** Are his ideas on formation collected anywhere, so that people outside the Society could have access to what he has expressed in these various places?

**McGarry:** We haven't made a full collection of what he has said about formation, but recently our Indian Assistancy published three volumes of Father General's talks, letters, and discourses, which con-

tain some very valuable material. In Spain, two volumes of his addresses are currently being prepared, one specifically for Jesuits and another for much more general circulation. They ought to be published in 1982.

**HD:** Has any thought been given to the possibility of compiling his various talks on formation in one volume?

**McGarry:** I suppose that's something I should think about, but I haven't gotten around to it. Still, I think there's sufficient circulation of his ideas. In many ways the formation sector of the Society is obviously the most dynamic segment because it has all the young people in it, and I find that our young Jesuits have an enormous love for and appreciation of Father General. Anything he says resonates with them. His remarks are duplicated and passed around, so I'm not sure it's necessary to make a collection. But I wouldn't rule out the possibility.



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# EXPERIENCING TERMINATION IN COMMUNITY

Loughlan Sofield, S.T., and Rosine Hammett, C.S.C.

**G**roup theorists maintain that all groups move through predictable stages. Although the phases of group structure and the formal labels attached to the stages of group life vary according to specific theories, there is an indisputable common element. Inevitably, any group will experience termination—no group exists in perpetuum. Whether one individual separates from the group or the group itself ceases to exist, termination will occur.

Community life is a group experience and as such is not exempt from the processes underlying all groups. When the community gathers for the first time, it begins its group life together. At some point in its history (whether the time is brief or extended) the composition of the community will change.

A single member of a group may leave while the rest of the members remain, but this one loss terminates the identity of this particular group. When the community resumes with a different membership constellation, it is a new and different group, and the cycle begins anew.

It is our belief that termination exerts a profound impact on the lives of community members, yet it is a little recognized or understood dynamic. Formation programs prepare individuals for many aspects of community life but rarely for dealing with this experience. Termination, which involves a separation that frequently produces painful feelings of loss, affects individuals in two basic ways: as a real loss in the present and as a catalyst and symbol for resurfacing the unresolved feelings connected with terminations experienced in the past.

## TERMINATION AS LOSS IN THE PRESENT

Pause for a few moments and recall a community in which you lived or an apostolate in which you ministered and where you grew very close to those with whom you lived or worked. Remember the feelings that surrounded that experience and the special place those people had in your life. When you have spent some time cherishing memories, try to recollect the feelings and the intense emotions that were generated when you left. In all probability such a separation produced a profound sense of loss accompanied by feelings of intense sadness,

pain, and emptiness. Ask yourself these questions: How did I deal with those feelings? With whom did I share them? Did I allow the other parties involved to share and discuss their feelings?

Our experience in working with members of religious communities is that individuals not only avoid dealing with the feelings surrounding separation but they also tend to deny or suppress them. It is regrettable that there are members of religious communities who have remained on the periphery and have never experienced the pain of separation and termination. They never invest themselves enough to become close to others and to develop a sense of intimacy, a quality that frees a person to share with another without fear of rejection or loss of self-identity. According to psychoanalyst Erik Erikson's theory of development, a person cannot exhibit concern for society or guide future generations (generativity) until he has resolved the crises surrounding relationships (intimacy). It is difficult to believe that religious who have shielded themselves from the vulnerability of intimacy can be truly ministering people capable of being and doing for others.

## STAGES OF TERMINATION

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's classic work on death and dying provides a model for the dynamic that occurs when an individual experiences termination of a meaningful relationship. She has enumerated five stages through which people generally proceed: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally, acceptance. There is a parallel dynamic for religious who experience termination from a community or ministry.

Initially, there is a denial of the loss, or a denial of the feelings generated by the loss. Many religious have labeled feelings as bad and therefore work hard to deny them. If, for example, Brother Joe

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feels sadness at the time of termination, he might struggle to deny (unconsciously) that feeling for fear that shedding tears would be seen as a lack of virility. In doing so, he denies a very basic, beautiful emotion. He denies that the loss has meaning for him. Like many male religious, he may resort to humor in an attempt to hide the intense feelings that make him very uncomfortable.

At the second stage, denied feelings are expressed as anger. Illogical as it may seem, this anger may be directed toward those we will miss. More often it will be directed at others who become innocent victims of our displaced anger. At times of termination we often see a great deal of free-floating hostility. For example, Sister Mary is being reassigned to a new convent and ministry after years of dedicated, loving ministry among a group of Hispanic parishioners. During her years there, a beautiful bond of mutual love has developed between her and the parishioners. She experiences pain in anticipating the termination and separation and expresses it in outbursts of anger toward the young curate. Everything he does is wrong. She is also critical of everything that is happening in the community and berates the young sisters for their lack of commitment. She is what some would describe as an "angry woman." In reality, she is a hurting woman. Her hurt is being felt as anger and expressed as hostility. As destructive as this might be, it is better than what frequently occurs. Many religious, like Brother Joe, deny their feelings. But denied feelings must be expressed in some way. When anger is repressed (unconsciously) or suppressed (consciously), it is often turned inward. Sister Mary may become depressed as her anger is turned inward. It is a very real, honest response to a painful situation, an anticipated termination. The difficulty is not with the feeling but with the way it is being expressed.

A bargaining process that is an attempt to work out an arrangement that will alleviate the finality of the termination is the next stage. Father Tom has been involved in a process of discerning for the past year. He has reached a point where he is questioning his effectiveness in his ministry as a high school teacher. He begins searching for a new ministry but one that allows him to continue teaching on a part-time basis. He seeks a way to terminate a ministry in which he no longer feels effective, but at the same time he is ambivalent and wants to soften the finality of the decision by not letting go. He has reached the stage that has been described as the time "to stop discerning and start deciding." To leave this apostolate that has given him so much satisfaction in the past will be very difficult. To hold on to it when he knows he is not being effective is potentially destructive for him and for his students.

As we enter into mourning and grief, the feeling of depression follows. Depression is a normal, healthy consequence of loss. Brother Joe, Sister

Mary, and Father Tom simply have to accept this as a normal process in the life of a "pilgrim person." Some degree of depression is inevitable, but it can be the source of a new life of resurrection if we accept it, confront it, work through it, and reinvest ourselves as people of faith in the beauty of the new life. In the healthy personality, there is a gradual acceptance and reinvestment of the self into new people and new situations.

Termination of a meaningful relationship produces stress. The degree and intensity of loss experienced is in proportion to the depth and meaning of the relationship. Mental health professionals have long been aware that the most traumatic experiences that a person must endure are often those involving termination and separation. In this day and age, when stress and burnout have become so commonplace, religious communities must be more aware of the impact that loss and termination have on their members. Failure to recognize and respond to this situation can only have a profound negative impact on the lives of the persons affected and render them less effective as the ministering people the Lord has called them to be.

## TERMINATION AS SYMBOLIC

Loss is always two dimensional. Not only do we experience the pain of the present loss, but each loss, no matter how insignificant, serves as a catalyst for bringing unresolved feelings to the surface. It brings to the forefront of our psyche suppressed or repressed feelings surrounding previous terminations, particularly those we have avoided facing or have not adequately resolved. The present loss serves as a symbol to "re-present" the unfinished grieving of intense past losses. Grieving is never completed; there is always a certain amount left unfinished.

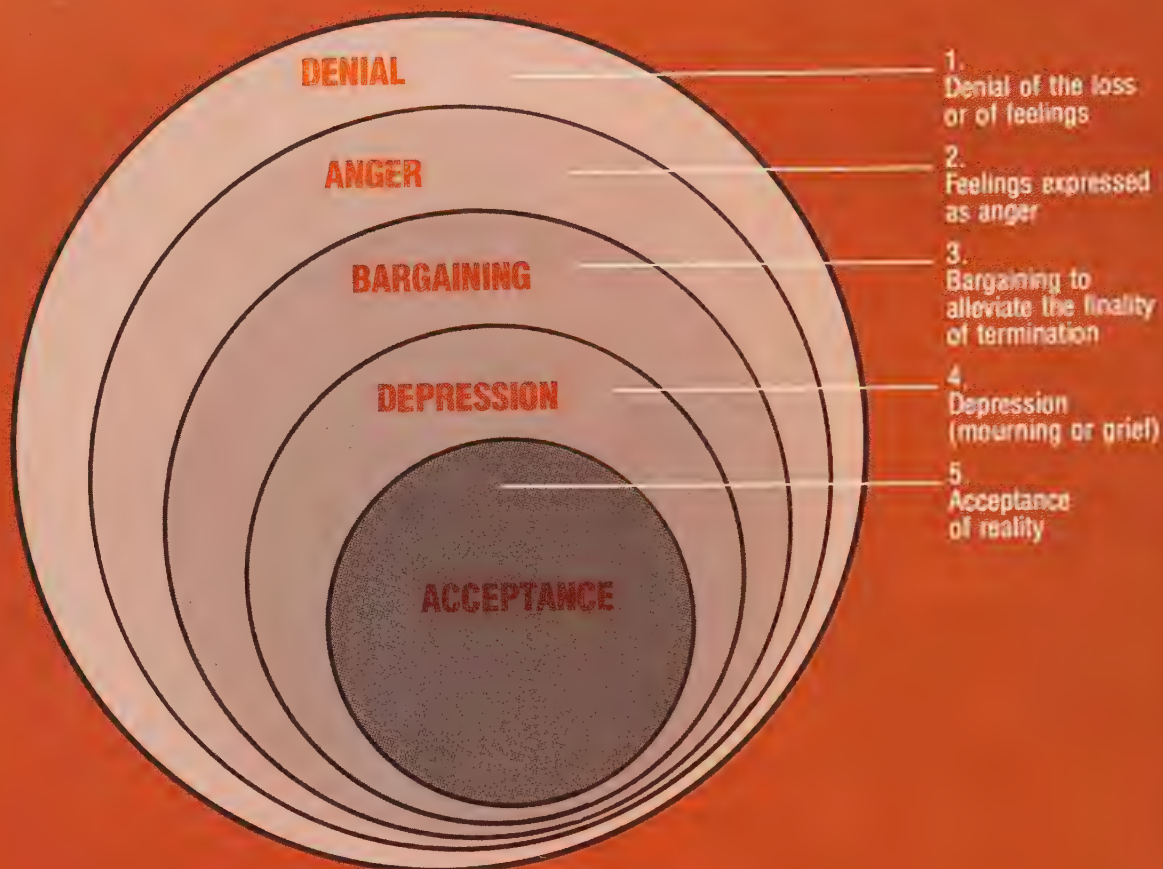
Recall an event in your life in which a loss was seemingly minor yet your reaction was intense and out of proportion to the event that precipitated it. You may have been puzzled by the amount of grief generated by this relatively minor loss. This new loss was serving as a stimulus and vehicle for releasing unfinished business from the past.

A good example of this kind of catalytic event can be seen in the story shared by a friend. He had just viewed the poignant movie *The Way We Were*, left the theater, and returned to his car. Suddenly and quite unexpectedly he found himself affected by the movie. His mind worked like a slide projector as each of the profound losses he had experienced in his life resurfaced. The movie had served as a catalyst to release some of the still unfinished grieving, and he found himself weeping.

We have seen communities in which the death of a pet has produced grief far beyond what would seem normal. What we are witnessing is a true symbolic termination. The death of the dog or cat has allowed people to release some of the pain and



## STAGES EXPERIENCED IN TERMINATION



grief they did not allow themselves to experience at the time of an earlier, more meaningful loss. The memory and pain that accompanied the death of a parent when religious life disapproved of outward expression of feelings may be revived. Perhaps the barrier to expression was the personal expectations that a religious placed on himself, the series of "shoulds" that have dictated his life. "I should be strong." "I should be a minister to the others in my family." "I should be a good example of the tower of strength (or the valiant woman) to the others in my family." Whatever the "shoulds" that prevailed in the example of the pet, the earlier grief

was buried and then released by another, less traumatic loss. The pet's death becomes the symbol of the grieving that was never before accomplished.

### TERMINATION AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

One of the reasons termination is such a powerful dynamic in our lives is related to our individual development. Human development is a series of terminations and separations, each of which provides a point of great trauma in the development of the individual.



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## **For the young religious, separation, especially from peers leaving religious life, has a profound effect.**

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The process begins at birth when the infant is separated from its mother's womb. As the young child grows and develops a sense of independence, the work of identifying oneself as a separate and unique individual begins. Throughout adolescence and into young adulthood, the individual gradually relinquishes emotional supports and separates from the guardianship of the family. The adult years are checkered with numerous separations of varying significance as the person moves toward the fear of the ultimate separation in life—death. None of these transitions is ever perfectly resolved. In our progress through these stages the “unfinished” crises continue to influence our present life, and we try to resolve them as we encounter new separations and terminations. Some therapists maintain that the most therapeutic moments in people's lives are those when they successfully work through a separation and termination. Some therapies even focus on forcing people to deal with the reality of such endings.

### **TERMINATION IN COMMUNITY**

Termination is a powerful dynamic in the lives of religious, yet religious tend to ignore its impact on community life. In responding to apostolic or congregational needs, the religious is frequently “on the move.” Rarely does a religious live with the same community for an extended length of time. Even if the individual remains, one or several other community members will depart. A religious community that does not experience a yearly change in membership is probably the exception rather than the rule. Religious, whether they are

the persons leaving or those staying behind, encounter separation on a regular basis, and each separation involves terminations of relationships with those who have lived and labored together.

The effects of termination have great repercussions on community life, yet these are frequently ignored. For the young religious, separation, especially from peers leaving religious life, has a profound impact. Communities fail to provide opportunities for a young person to discuss these feelings and even discourage such discussion. This may result in a fight or flight reaction on the part of the young person. Fearing the hurt involved in establishing friendships, individuals isolate themselves from community and become more individualistic. On the other extreme, they may react in anger, expressing hostility toward a convenient scapegoat, which is frequently the administration.

At the opposite end of the spectrum are the older religious who encounter frequent deaths of close friends, family members, and peers. These religious are forced to grapple with the reality of their own impending death. Even for a man or woman of faith, this can be anxiety provoking.

Religious in their mid-years often experience the trauma of constant uprooting. This situation parallels what is occurring in society at large. Statistics indicate that 25% of all Americans move every year. Usually, when a man or woman relocates, the family that provides emotional and psychological support also moves. This is generally not the case for religious. When the religious relocates to another ministry, community, or geographic area, the Christian community he worked with, or the local religious community that provided a source of support is left behind, and this adds to the difficulty of transition. Many religious have likened the situation to divorce with all its inherent trauma. Transition may be felt even more acutely by religious who see their friends sinking roots at the very time their own uprootedness is becoming more difficult and a standard way of life for religious.

In the last few years we have encountered a number of religious who are unable to reinvest themselves in new assignments. They describe themselves as having no energy left, nothing more to give. Community life and ministry are putting demands on individuals that seem to drain their strength and to accentuate their lack of zeal, a condition popularly referred to as burnout. Closer investigation of these individuals provides a picture of a person who has invested himself deeply in relationships and in ministries and has experienced a series of terminations. The specific details delineate a loving, committed person who generously gives of himself to others, but who lacks a realization of the emotional toll that terminations produce. By avoiding the feelings concomitant with separation, people on their way to burnout cannot experience any sense of closure. They become one-dimensional pilgrims, always moving on but leav-



ing a part of themselves behind. After a series of transitions that have not been worked through there is nothing left to give, and they experience a profound sense of emptiness.

But religious *are* pilgrims. And as pilgrim people we must be ready to move on and so must make a special effort to take with us in our hearts those we leave behind. After resolving some of our feelings about separation we can reinvest ourselves with renewed vigor and commitment. The pain of loss still exists, but the memory of the beauty of the relationships provides us with a sense of joy and gratitude.

## GOODBYE BEFORE HELLO

Experience in religious communities often reveals that the group cannot allow new people into it until it has adequately relinquished the former members; the group members cannot say hello until they have learned to say goodbye. We visited a large city parish recently that had a greatly loved pastor, a member of a religious community. When he was transferred, he claimed that the people would not be able to deal effectively with his absence. He managed, as is quite evident, to project his own difficulty with termination onto the parishioners. As a result, he did not tell the parishioners he was leaving until the Sunday before his departure. They experienced a mixture of sorrow and hurt—and anger. Their problem was to determine the object of their anger. They loved the pastor too much to be angry with him. The religious superiors who transferred the man were too far away for the parishioners to express their anger toward them. So, as frequently happens, the new pastor was the recipient of the anger. It took the people a couple of years before they accepted this man, because his predecessor never allowed the people to express their sadness, hurt, and anger toward him for leaving them.

Similarly, in communities we are often unable to incorporate new members because we have not yet adequately dealt with our feelings toward those who have left. This is likely to happen when those who left meant a lot to us, and especially if they initiated the change.

Living community life today places the religious in a stress-filled dilemma. A community that involves sharing and growing in intimacy is strongly advocated, but rarely are opportunities provided for religious to deal adequately with the pain of loss that this type of community life engenders.

There is an increasing sensitivity to the pain and needs of the individual who is departing, but there is no corresponding awareness of the pain in store for those who remain. The person leaving can enjoy the excitement and anticipation of a new experience; those who are left behind often feel only a sense of loss and emptiness. Consequently, termination is usually more difficult for those who re-

main, and communities must be much more sensitive to this group's plight.

In her book *Unfinished Business* [reviewed in this issue] Maggie Scarf states that according to recent research, termination is more traumatic for women than for men, because women generally invest themselves more intensely in relationships than do men. The result of such intensity is that women experience separations and terminations with a sense of devastation that often leads to depression. Communities of women especially must provide their members with explicit opportunities to deal with terminations.

It is not the purpose of this article to advocate avoiding terminations. They are inevitable and it is our belief that they provide opportunities for personal growth. A few religious will be too psychologically weak to withstand frequent terminations, yet the majority of religious possess the emotional and psychological strength to tolerate them. Dealing with feelings generated by termination does not lessen the pain involved; instead, the pain gives birth to new insights and strengthens our emotional health. Successful confrontation of the feelings allows us to grow in the zest and excitement vital to living full personal and ministerial lives. Key questions in the life of a religious must be: How do I deal with termination? What can I learn? Is there room for growth or change?

## DEALING WITH TERMINATION

Although religious profess to be death-resurrection people, this perception more frequently reflects rhetoric than reality. In community life, religious have avoided dealing with the death, the terminations and separations, and have proceeded directly to the resurrection. Community life is unreal if the normal, slow process of moving through death to resurrection is absent. To live in community is to experience a rhythm of light and darkness, a test of faith and doubt, and an emergence of love and loneliness. Movement from death to resurrection demands active participation. Religious must not be passive victims of termination. To avoid this, we suggest the following:

*Attempt to isolate and identify feelings.* The feelings associated with termination are many and varied. They are influenced not only by our personal, unique past but also by the level of intimacy in the relationship. One consistent feeling present at termination is ambivalence (the coexistence of positive and negative feelings toward the same person, object, or event). An example is the experience at graduation. The joyful anticipation of what lies ahead is mixed with sadness in leaving behind familiar persons, places, and situations.

Don't flee from feelings. When you experience the pain of termination, take time to reflect on it. Because of the pain involved, we often settle for a conscious awareness of only the most superficial



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## Community life is unreal if the normal, slow process of moving through death to resurrection is absent.

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feelings. The more open you can be, the more opportunities you have to grow in the experience.

*Accept each of the feelings as appropriate.* Terminations may bring feelings of relief, anger, sadness, anxiety, joy, or any combination of a myriad of feelings. None are wrong. Feelings are simply a response to stimuli. Many religious have developed sensitive radar systems that allow them to encourage and support others to accept their feelings while maintaining a strict self-censorship of their own. Whatever feelings are generated by termination must be accepted without condemning ourselves for their inappropriateness.

Each of us has consciously learned a list of feelings that we believe are inappropriate or unacceptable for us. When these feelings are aroused and we refuse to acknowledge them consciously, they are often expressed in inappropriate behavior. Anger, for instance, has been labeled by Brother John as an inappropriate feeling for a minister. Instead of dealing with legitimate anger he unconsciously stores it in his personal pressure cooker where it is likely to explode one day at the wrong person or at the wrong time, with an intensity disproportional to the precipitating event. When we can accept the feeling, we can choose to deal with it in a mature, appropriate manner.

*Talk about your feelings.* This is the most important aspect of the process and frequently the point at which the process becomes short-circuited. Few religious have been trained to discuss feelings, and to verbalize them can be an intimidating prospect. Yet it is imperative that these feelings be talked about, especially among persons sharing the termination. This dialogue should be anticipated long

before the last farewells; to relegate it to the final meeting defeats the purpose. Individuals need time to get in touch with and work through feelings. Thus, the dialogue should be initiated several weeks before the actual ending to allow for closure.

Secrecy and ambiguity breed anxiety, yet some communities still maintain a system of changes that perpetuates rumor and counterrumor. The less this occurs and the more the community can be involved in the process of decision making surrounding the change, the healthier the results will be for the individual and for the community.

Sharing is most beneficial when the dialogue is honest and direct. This level of interaction indicates trust in those we share with; it also involves personal risk. Discussing personal feelings with another places us in a vulnerable position. When a community respects the individual's willingness to take a risk, an atmosphere of support is created and this, in turn, may encourage others to disclose their feelings.

It is important to state again at this point that both the person leaving and the people left behind experience a sense of loss. All those involved must be encouraged to talk about their feelings. When this dialogue takes place, termination can be one of the most enriching experiences in community life.

Perhaps a personal story that was related to us best describes how this can be done:

I can recall very vividly my change from a community and a ministry which had been a beautiful and rewarding experience. Leaving was very difficult for me. The other members of the community shared honestly and openly their feelings about my leaving and permitted me to do the same. I can remember one instance in particular. One of my confreres, who was not ordinarily seen as a sensitive person, approached me and shared quite simply and beautifully what he felt I had meant to the community and that I would be greatly missed. I left the encounter with a deep sense of appreciation to that man, as well as very moist eyes.

If each of us were willing to engage in this type of dialogue, we would certainly find terminations an experience that fosters growth in our holiness and healthiness.

*Allow the others involved to talk about their feelings.* The most difficult step in the termination process is to listen to another's pain, since listening arouses our own present grief and triggers unresolved griefs of the past. This can be a threatening experience. Our normal tendency is to avoid the issue and to quickly change the topic of conversation.

Since it is difficult to speak directly about terminations, the message frequently comes to us disguised, and we can easily miss it. In general, people talk about feelings of loss in symbolic ways. Topics



such as death and sickness can become obsessive themes in groups experiencing termination. At this juncture communities may need the assistance of a facilitator who can assist the group in translating the symbolic language. Communities seem to enter into an unspoken collusion to avoid discussing the feelings associated with termination. An example can be seen in a situation in which we served as facilitators for a community of men. During their final session all the traditional themes emerged. They were unable to stick to the agenda and tasks they had defined. Instead, there followed a litany of "can-you-top-this" stories of recent sicknesses and deaths. As cofacilitators of the group, we attempted to point out that they were off the track. It was apparent that their need to talk about the termination themes without addressing their feelings was strongly ingrained. Our initial attempts to point this out were met with denial and resistance, which was followed by discussion of other termination themes. Finally, our repeated interventions were successful and the group, with a sense of relief, began talking directly about their feelings. As a result they experienced a great deal of personal growth, and they accomplished the difficult task of dealing directly with termination, something they had never previously been able to do.

If the feelings surrounding termination are not addressed directly or symbolically, they may erupt in bizarre, regressive behavior. In our experience, we have witnessed such behavior in groups of otherwise mature individuals, with the fight or flight themes being expressed in extreme forms. Often it appears that groups that have been growing toward their goal of being stronger faith communities regressively manifest the type of polarization and hostility that dominated their earlier meetings. It is as though they are trying to convince themselves that they really haven't progressed that far and that it is futile to attempt to do so. At this stage the facilitator faces the difficult task of helping the group to see that the regression and resistance represent a normal fear of dealing with termination.

The other major resistance employed by communities to avoid dealing with termination is to cancel the last few meetings because "we're all too busy."

*Ritualize the loss.* For the process to be completed, termination needs to be ritualized. Our society formalizes certain key passages in life. For example, the bar mitzvah marks a young man's departure from childhood into manhood; a woman's bridal shower celebrates her entrance into a new state of life; and the office retirement party formally closes the door on many years of labor. Often religious communities celebrate the end of the year but do not make it explicit that the celebration marks the end of the community. It is important that ritualization be accompanied by dialogue about the termination. Both are essential. The

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ritualization can take the form of a liturgy, party, or any other form that allows the community to symbolically relate to its ending.

*Allow yourself the time and space to grieve.* Death, when it comes suddenly, brings the most poignant experience of grief; its irrevocableness deprives us of the gradual process of termination. This abrupt end to a meaningful relationship leaves us with a feeling of incompleteness and impotency. Perhaps these feelings are capsuled in the reaction of a woman who, on learning of the sudden death of her father, could only cry helplessly, "But I didn't say goodbye."

Similarly, some degree of grief and sense of incompleteness accompany all terminations. When religious communities end their life together as a group, the individual members are likely to feel sad. Since grieving is absolutely essential to complete the unfinished business of termination, it is important to allow sufficient time for it. Grieving follows its own pattern and timetable; you cannot program it. There is no need to say "but I should be finished grieving by now."

*Reinvest yourself in new relationships and situations.* This is the culmination of the death-resurrection process. Allowing ourselves to progress through the phases of separation and loss revitalizes and integrates us. As we release our grasp on the past, we become free to embrace new relationships and new situations. We have met the Lord in those we have lived with and ministered to. We are grateful, but it is time to move on to discover him anew in others. This is the ultimate sign of health and maturity: to have progressed through the slow process of grieving to the point at which



we are prepared to risk investing ourselves in new relationships.

## GRIEVING CAN LIBERATE

Termination is an inevitable stage in the life of every community. It can be a painful process that we resist because of the feelings it generates. Sometimes the pain will be directly related to the present loss. At other times it may be the result of unfinished business from long-past terminations.

Ultimately, as people of hope, we must allow ourselves to proceed through the slow, often painful process of normal grieving, with all its compo-

nent parts. Terminations dealt with leave us free to reinvest ourselves in people and situations where we can again encounter the Lord.

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I need you  
to breathe life into me;  
to accept me as I am here and now;  
to show me I'm worth something to you,  
and you want me to be with you.

I need you  
to think that my feelings are okay;  
that even though I have a lot of growing to do,  
you think it's all right  
for me to have the feelings I have now.

I need you  
to accept me  
and the way I think,  
even if at times I contradict myself  
and change my mind.

I need you  
to agree with me  
even when we don't agree,  
but just agree to disagree.

I need you  
to be glad I'm here,  
to be glad I'm myself,  
to help me like myself,  
to help me like what I do,  
and what I make,  
and what I have,  
even when it's not much.

I need you  
at times to give me signs  
that you accept me,  
that you see I'm worthwhile,  
that you want me as a friend.

I need you  
to make me feel  
you want to be with me,  
not just for this moment  
and then walk away  
and forget me,  
but to be my friend  
forever.

## I NEED YOU

**H**UMAN DEVELOPMENT recently received this heartwarming message from Father Joseph A. Sommer, S.J., who is on the staff at the Colombiere Retreat Conference Center, Clarkston, Michigan:

"Your magazine . . . has been interesting, informative and very helpful personally. One article I liked especially is . . . 'Indispensable Self-Esteem.' I found it not only good for myself but also in my retreat and counseling work . . . so much so, that I put some of the ideas into a loose verse form. Many have found 'I Need You' so much to the point that they have requested copies from me. So the idea came to me that perhaps you might like to put it in one of your future issues. This will be a way of my thanking you for the help you're giving me in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. Keep up the good work!"

We're deeply grateful to Father Sommer and delighted to have the chance to share his sensitive verses with our readers.



# PERFECTION

MEANS RIGHTLY AIMED

James Torrens, S.J.

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The machine is self-correcting. It will expunge. That letter you composed for your constituents full of non sequiturs, misspellings (one "s"? two?), solecisms, syntactic flubs,

other assorted boo boos—you just depress the instruction key. The carriage will then lunge back; as for your blemish, out it rubs. Make yourself perfect. Store no inconsequence,

recall only what's judicious. The machine dubs where you have faltered, inserts what you confess omitted, justifies ragged margins, and repents feelings. But it's hard to please. Once take the plunge

of editing and it goes crazy, scarcely relents until all trace is gone of pleasure, anger. It scrubs and scrubs. Hardly your signature survives the sponge.

Yet and still, marvel how the neat words process.

(Reprinted by permission from *The San Francisco Quarterly*, Spring, 1981)

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**P**erfection—it now seems a strange term, a curiosity of religious language. Those of us beyond a certain age were brought up on treatises of religious perfection, such as those by Tanqueray or Father Alphonsus Rodriguez. The religious life was talked of, somewhat grandly, as a state of perfection. But perfection these days has a bad reputation.

The term perfection still appears in some closely defined uses. A steak can come off the grill "done to perfection." A woman at a social gathering can perhaps draw the admiring claim, "She's perfection"—though we think with a shiver of Mary Tyler Moore in the film *Ordinary People*—and a television

announcer can say of an outstanding play in baseball, "That's perfection." But mostly the phrase has an old-fashioned ring. We seem to have assented to the folk witticism, "Nobody's perfect."

Is perfection a chimera, a notion we would do well to banish because it keeps people stretched toward impossible standards? In the religious realm perfection would seem ruled out by too much we are now aware of—the shadow of Pelagius, the discovery of original sin as a subtle invader of any culture, the continual exposé of everyone's fallibility and inconsistency, almost the definition of the human as a blend of strength and weakness. Developmental psychology too, calling attention as it does to the drama of human growth through imperfect stages, seems to make the word "imperfect" an invariable pronouncement upon any of us at any stage of our lives. And haven't we had enough of the beautiful people who do brilliantly or are paragons of piety? We know what most of them come to!

Yet the hankering, the thirst, remains. Perhaps we remember with gratitude the great school-teacher or coach who demanded perfection and to whom, as adults, we credit our achievement. And we still admire perfection in the arts, in the skilled crafts, despite the cult of roughness we seem to find on display in the galleries, or in the neglect of finish among workmen, or even in the sorry state of the spelling of documents. An artist in Rockport, Massachusetts, once showed me his painting of the Maine woods, directing my attention to a covered bridge. The middle of the bridge was stroked in with exquisite detail. "Andrew Wyeth did that for me," he said. "I could never have afforded to."

Wyeth—the painter who could afford to take infinite pains. Beethoven, trying and rejecting a hundred or so starts before hitting on the four-note opening for the Fifth Symphony that now strikes everyone as the inevitable motif. That is the artistic passion. And the poems of E. E. Cummings, with

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Father Torrens has recently completed his term as rector of the Jesuit Community at the University of San Francisco, where he also teaches English.



spontaneity as their constant theme and a certain erotic abandon as their frequent subject matter, turn out to have been worked over dozens of times each before appearing in print.

Barbara Tuchman, in a recent essay titled "Quality and Non-Quality" (*San Francisco Examiner*, "This World," Nov. 16, 1980), questioned "whether quality in product and effort has become a vanishing element of current civilization." Reflecting on the idiotic laughter of television, throw-away products, careless service, she avers that, yes, Gresham's law holds the field. Tuchman suggests that perfection has fled to technology—microchips, pacemakers, drip-water techniques for arid zones—where pinpoint accuracy is essential.

Perhaps right here the problem suddenly defines itself. Machinelike perfection, who is capable of it? Who wants it? Most recently the problem is raised by that whiz of a business machine, the word processor. In this new servant of ours, the nomenclature itself makes us fear the capacity to do something dire to our messages, like the food processor does to our food. We are forgivably hesitant about coming across cool and bland.

Plato, after all, proceeded from the underlying conviction that the perfect is not of earth. Was he right? Plato is perhaps our clue to what goes wrong. If perfection is an absolute condition, being in its flawless form, the human meeting all possible specifications, then we are doomed—or allowed to relax with our swarm of predestined flaws. Consider the case of Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo, a charming but oddly distant person, was not at all relaxed about perfection. In his writings we read the continual lament: "Who will tell me if anything was ever finished?" Neither the works of his beloved Nature, mysterious and elusive, at which he peered exhaustively, nor his own artistic productions provided the answer.

In Leonardo's painting "Adoration of the Magi," revolutionary though it is, something beyond excessive grandeur of conception or resistance of materials blocked him from applying color or even from drawing completely. Did Leonardo suffer the curse of perfectionism, the strange malady that freezes up some of the best talent, keeps people obscurely despairing that they will never be able to please the harsh master within? It would seem so, in a very refined form. The parable of the Talents, curiously, is about exactly this, the man or woman frightened off from attempting some great work or service or restlessly discontent in the course of work and unable to step back at the end of it to exclaim, "Yes, that's it. As good as I can make it and just what's called for. Not bad!"

Our Lord himself concentrated the Sermon on the Mount into this one sentence, "Be perfect, in the way your heavenly Father is." This meant, above all, do not be obsessed by surface, where scruple and legalism and self-justification concentrate, but interiorize, get to the heart of things, enter into a

whole context of attitude—reverence, service, praise—whereby we act in God's own spirit. Jesus had to use triple underlining on this message for the Jews. Allow God, your loving Father, to work the effects of his love upon your conduct: reconciliation of grievances, purity and loyalty of affections, directness of speech, slowness to take offense, loving concern for offenders.

The observant young man of the gospel is told: A whole new generosity and breadth of view is available to you, "if you would be perfect." Do not hold or cling to your flawless conduct; not less but more is asked of you, new gestures of detachment and personal attachment. It is what Alban Goodier, after Paul, called "the more excellent way." The Church, too, has been slow to learn this lesson. If we have had to renew our approach to Lent, to instruction for the sacrament of penance, it is because of the danger of ending up with what Pierre Charles once called "Christ under the old law," the judge asking, Did you strictly fulfill these certain rules? Even in monastic life, as Thomas Merton often worried aloud, observances do not of themselves produce deepened imitation of the Lord.

The Greek word *teleion* (perfect) means brought to a goal, brought through stages and process to an end point. There is a goal for us, a possibility of quite defined perfection at any time in our lives. It is given to us to do what God wishes of us, to be rightly aimed. When St. Paul called the Corinthians "mature," *teleioi*, it was because they did not have to be milk fed; they were capable of the hearty food of the wisdom of the cross.

In the letter to the Hebrews, i.e., to Christian convert leaders of that religious people avid for justice, the word perfection is a motif. God's age-old plan was "to perfect the leader and originator of our salvation," Jesus, through suffering (2, 10; 12, 2), and he in turn, once perfected (5, 9, perfected by the Holy Spirit to offer himself totally to the Father), could bring us to a holy form—salvation. Heaven, his present place, is the abode of "the just ones made perfect," those who in his Spirit walked the way of patient loving submission.

All those treatises of perfection, with the string of virtues they consider and vices they worry of, have to come back in the long run to this, the joyful acceptance of what God has offered to us—talents, neighbors, the way of the cross. (They do, of course, but with such complicated divisions and distinctions). We have no illusion of shining with a brilliant finish, partly because there are too many rough spots and sides to us anyway, but mainly because that is not what we are called to. But we still do pray to be saints, to be perfect, that is, to live as fully as may be, down to particulars, in Christ's own loving Spirit.

Chinese artists have long had a humble custom: always leave something unfinished, some imperfection in the painting. We rest confident that this, at least, will take care of itself.



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# REALISTIC COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

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## A Clarification and Application of Some Useful Sociologic Concepts

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GREGORY MANLY, C.P.

**T**wo very basic questions have led me to look at and reflect on some sociologic concepts that clarify the nature of community: What can religious expect of their community? and What does a religious community expect of each member?

Over the past 10 or 15 years, it has been assumed that in every religious community there can and should be a close relationship, akin to friendship, among all the members. Young people who join communities expect it. The religious themselves desire it and work hard at attaining it. Structures, such as community meetings, community days, community sharing time and weekends away, are set up to foster it. Psychologists are called in to facilitate communication. When all these efforts fail to produce the close relationships, many religious are sad and upset; they consider their community a failure. They complain that they have no community life.

There are also religious who are sad and upset for the opposite reason: they just cannot enter into a close relationship with every member of the community, perhaps not even with one member. They perceive themselves as on the periphery of the community, and they feel guilty about it. Often, they are led to believe that they are not good community members.

Thus, in religious circles today we find those who feel that close relationships within every religious community are the ideal and those who feel a repugnance to that ideal. With the hope that clarifying the concept of religious community would help shed light on this situation I undertook a little

sociologic research and added reflections on my own experience of nearly 40 years of religious life.

The first concept I explored was the group. A group is a collection of persons who have some common bond arising from a distinctive set of social relations. It is not merely the sum total of the individuals who constitute it. Each group is an entity, with a nature of its own. It has a specific form and structure, a history, and aims. It has a life of its own. The community is one type of group. Other groups are the family, the citizens of a city or state, Catholics, or a mob. One factor determining the type of group is the nature of relationships among its members: the one-to-one relationships between members and the relationship of each member to the group as a whole.

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships in groups can be primary or secondary or a combination of the two. The four characteristics of primary relationships are:

(1) Freedom in relating. The persons in the relationship do not feel bound by any specific rules of conduct in their interaction, but feel free to express their emotions and to talk about whatever is most intimate and personal to them.

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- (2) Total acceptance. Individuals are accepted solely and totally for themselves and not for how useful they can be.
- (3) Nontransferable. No other person can take the place of anyone with whom I have a primary relationship.
- (4) Personal fulfillment. A person's deepest human needs are met in the relationship.

Secondary relationships do not have these four features. In place of the freedom and informal behavior of primary relationships there are rigid rules governing conduct, specific patterns of behavior to be followed, a consciousness of rights and duties, and a suppression of free expression of feelings. Individuals are important only because of their contribution in particular roles, so other persons can take their place. Obviously, then, a secondary relationship does not answer deeper human needs.

The temptation is to label one or the other of these types of relationship as good or bad, but neither one is always desirable or always undesirable. What is important is the situation. For example, in an athletic contest or in a lecture, interaction of the primary type would be out of place.

Primary relationships are necessary in everyone's life. They involve a degree of giving and

receiving that can occur only with a total commitment to another person and to interactions that bring out our deepest levels. Within such relationships we are most alive and responsive to the other. Moreover, primary relationships are indispensable for growth in maturity.

### PRIMARY GROUPS DESCRIBED

A group can be described as primary if it is based on and sustains primary relationships, e.g., families and support groups. Primary groups can develop within a secondary group that has been together long enough for strong bonds to form among the members. Or a circle of friends who have a lot in common can become a primary group. This happens more easily in a small group than in a large one.

Group members enter into primary relationships voluntarily as they experience security and personal growth. This occurs especially in a peer group, with individuals of about the same age and with similar interests.

Primary groups do not necessarily live in unruffled harmony and undisturbed fellowship. There can be differences, tensions, and negative emotional responses. That is to be expected. What is important is the depth of communication: the ex-

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS	
Primary Relationships and Groups	Secondary Relationships and Groups
Freedom in relating	Rules govern conduct
Persons accepted totally for themselves	Roles are valued
No substitution possible	People are interchangeable
Fulfillment of deepest needs	Deepest needs not met



pression of emotions tends to influence the feelings, values, and motivations of others. But for this to take place, group membership is not sufficient. The individual must be drawn into the group by participating in group activities that the members find meaningful. Even routine, unemotional activities will increase the individual's feeling of belonging to the group.

Perhaps one of the more basic benefits to be derived from belonging to a primary group is the opportunity a member has to develop a self-image. Continued participation in group activities strengthens that identity. Sociologists believe that all people need to be members of a primary group or groups for the sake of their emotional health, satisfaction with life, and personal development.

Is a religious community intended to be a primary group? Before attempting an answer I would like to present some other characteristics of groups.

## GEMEINSCHAFT AND GESELLSCHAFT

A *gemeinschaft* is a primary community. It is characterized by (1) an assignment of status to the whole person; his job and the other aspects of his life are seen as a unity; (2) a high degree of cohesion based on widespread sharing of common attitudes and aims; and (3) a sense of unlimited commitment to the community, which is conceived of as a large kinship group and the source of personal identity. People do not deliberately join a *gemeinschaft*.

I once stayed in a *gemeinschaft* community, the small town of Donauwörth in Bavaria. What impressed me most was the townspeople's sense of interest in and responsibility toward the town. In contrast, I did not experience anything like that when I stayed in a suburb of Dublin, my hometown.

A *gesellschaft* is a group formed to achieve a definite aim or goal. People join this type of group not because they feel drawn by a natural bond or affinity but as a practical means of achieving a common objective. Any special-purpose organization is a *gesellschaft*. In contrast to a *gemeinschaft*, it is an aggregate rather than a tightly knit group.

I have found two points of special interest related to the concept of *gesellschaft*. First, in Germany, Jesuits are referred to as *gesellschaft*. Second, in a *gemeinschaft*, decision making is minority controlled, while a *gesellschaft* is a participant society, with popular demand having a large say in its government. It is of interest to me that in recent years, government in religious communities has moved from minority decision making toward popular demand. The question could be raised whether this indicates that in reality there is a drift, albeit unconscious, toward *gesellschaft*.

What type of group, then, is a religious community supposed to be? Because the term religious community can refer to a local community, a province, or a whole congregation, it will help to

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consider another classification of groups before attempting to answer the question.

## GROUPS CLASSIFIED BY RATIONALITY

In their book *Sociology: The Science of Society*, Lowry and Rankin classify groups on the basis of rationality. Behavior is considered rational when it is deliberate, preplanned, and calculated and has a definite goal. Behavior that is nonrational is emotional, impulsive, spontaneous, and unplanned.

Groups, therefore, can be differentiated into the following categories: (1) largely nonrational, e.g., collectivities, mobs, crowds; (2) mostly rational, e.g., large organizations, institutions such as schools, churches; (3) combination, e.g., associations, private clubs, pressure groups; and (4) variable (i.e., changing over time from one social setting to another), e.g., status groupings, communities such as towns, cities.

I was surprised, confused, and then enlightened by how these sociologists classify community. Their examples (towns, cities), with the characteristics of geographic location and a sense of belonging, are so different from the meaning and overtones given to the word in religious circles today.

## APPLICATION TO COMMUNITY

The less-rational/more-rational dichotomy can be applied with fruitful results to the four basic aspects of any group: (1) its formation; (2) its structure/organization; (3) its purpose/function; and (4) its life span.

With reference to the province/congregation as community, it can be stated that (1) the formation

of a province/congregation is something very deliberate and planned. (2) A province/congregation is highly organized and formally structured, although there may be some elements of the informal. (3) Its purpose transcends the personal interests of its members; it is apostolic, and its purposes are therefore public, while also including the private interests of its members. (4) Its life span is indefinite and extends beyond that of its members. As a group, then, a province or congregation is definitely a more rational type.

In regard to the local community: (1) it is planned and comes into being after deliberate action; (2) its structure can be informal to a large degree; (3) its purpose is public; (4) its life span exceeds that of its members. As a group, then, a local community is more rational rather than less rational, and it could be classified as a combination.

Based on these observations, I conclude that a local community is neither a collectivity, because of the way it is formed and its life span, nor an institution, because of the presence of informality and personal elements. It has something in common with an association, yet it is called a community.

A community is a group with two chief characteristics: (1) within it the individual can have most of the experiences and conduct most of the activities that are important to him, and (2) its members have a shared sense of belonging and feel that the group defines their distinctive identity. Theoretically, the members of a community live their whole lives within it; they feel a sense of kinship with the others who belong to it; and they accept the community as they accept their own names and family membership.

Communities are usually based on locality: a village, city, or nation. However, it is accurate to speak of the Catholic community, the Jewish community, and so forth, because religious affiliation has a unique set of activities, institutions, and boundaries.

But there is one further aspect of the Christian religious community to be considered: it is a faith community. As such, relationships within it will be on a Christian basis, with Christian values and motivation the determining factors in behavior. Above all, the community and its members will perceive their identity in the light of their incorporation into Christ through baptism, sharing his life, his relationship with the Father, and his mission of salvation.

## RECIPROCAL EXPECTATIONS

I now feel prepared to answer the two questions I raised at the beginning of this article.

First, what can religious expect of their community? What religious join and become members of is a group. The first relationship they have is with

the group; they do not yet know all of its members.

For religious, their profession is a commitment to God, Christ, and the Church through, with, and in the province. Their life will be lived in a succession of local communities, which they will enter into on a rational, nonspontaneous basis. The relationships within the community are not to be compared with the orientation family they grew up in, nor with the procreation family they would have established if they had married. The religious community is not a friendship group. A person does not deliberately join a friendship group; it arises and grows spontaneously. Neither is religious community a peer group: ages and interests can be very diverse.

Religious should not expect all the members of the local community to be interacting in primary relationships with each other. A primary relationship develops only with time; one grows into it. Over time, a community could develop into a primary group, but that should not be an expectation.

Again, all people need to have primary relationships. They can well be outside of the local community with other members of the province, a family, relatives, or friends. In fact, these relationships are so necessary that I question whether candidates should be accepted as postulants if they have not already developed some existing primary relationships. When I hear the frequent cry of some religious, "Religious life has let me down," I wonder whether they joined this group to have their need for primary relationships answered.

## LEGITIMATE EXPECTATIONS

From the local community religious can, I believe, expect (1) relationships based on Christian charity; (2) Christian trusting love, not necessarily closeness, among all the members; (3) acceptance and practice of Christian values; (4) to feel part of an apostolic-witnessing community with a mission; (5) to live and work toward Christian purposes and goals, as well as goals and purposes special to the congregation; (6) support in life and in apostolate; (7) a feeling of belonging and acceptance, an environment that fosters growth, and a strengthening of identity.

My second question, again, is, What does a religious community expect of each member? In reply, I would say it expects members (1) to live according to Christian values, especially that of loving service; (2) to join in the corporate witness-through-service in the manner in which the community hears itself called to live it; and (3) to contribute to community life, including the "common life," by living according to the vows.

## BASIC GROUP NEEDS

I am stressing the "common life" part of community life because, at least in the minds of many religious, the latter term currently carries an em-



phasis on close one-to-one relationships. While the development of primary relationships within the community is important, I feel that this recent emphasis on them has led to a weakening of each member's commitment to the group itself. With this goes the neglect of responsibility toward, and contribution to, the common life, including maintenance of the house, its environment, its financial situation, and its smooth running.

In view of the faith nature of the community, a fundamental expectation would be attendance of all members at community prayer. The call from God to a person to enter into a relationship with the community as a group comes before the call to foster deeper relationships with individual members. The call to contribute to the group's more basic needs comes before the call to meet my own, or another's, belonging, self-esteem, or self-actualizing needs.

## CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions flow out of what I have been saying: Community life is not equivalent to interaction in a primary group. A primary relationship among all the members is not necessary and is hardly possible. It would not be a suitable motivation for people to join a religious congregation to supply their need for primary relationships; nor should it be the motivation for living in a community.

It is possible that excellent religious persons who are vital members of their community will not have a primary relationship within the community, although they do have one outside it.

While they should encourage the human development and growth of individual religious in community life, superiors are on delicate, even dangerous ground when they initiate activities with the expectation that the community will become a primary group.

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To foster the growth of community spirit, what needs to be kept in the foreground of thinking and to serve as the basis of motivation is the individual's commitment to the community as a group, rather than a commitment to other individual members.

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# READINESS FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE

F. Edward Coughlin, O.F.M., Ph.D.

**W**ho qualifies as a candidate for religious life? I suspect this question is at the heart of many formation team discussions. Yet, a clear, direct answer is rarely, if ever, given. The question is complex but it can serve to focus many of the concerns surrounding the evaluation of persons for acceptance by and into a religious community. Any adequate answer must be based on the assumption that criteria—norms that are relevant, concrete, realistic, and observable—can be established. The task of formulating such criteria is difficult but certainly not impossible.

Ideally, a plan for formation reflects concern for the development of personal qualities and skills related to four general areas: human, theological, ministerial, and spiritual. Each progressive stage of the formation process should emphasize one of these four perspectives, although attention should be simultaneously given to the other areas.

Throughout the entire formation process a single question predominates: What commitment is this person capable of making in view of the level of maturity he has attained? In a 1979 address to the Catholic Theological Society of America, Regis Duffy, O.F.M., a professor at the Washington Theological Union, alerted his listeners to some of the realities confronting persons making commitments. With respect to the catechumenal model, Duffy stated, "In its classical form the cautious admission to and lengthy duration of catechuminate was required because of the nature of the process: a reassessment and realignment of commitments in terms of the Gospel. . . . Candidates are invited to confront the life crisis that is inevitable

when radically different values, meanings, and sense of time become the testing points of their experience at a given life stage."

I believe that Duffy's observations can be applied to the process of formation. Not surprisingly, the practical wisdom of the early catechumenal tradition is confirmed by the findings of today's social scientists, who force us to ask ourselves, Can we genuinely expect persons to make a deep, realistic, and permanent commitment without our considering their evolving sense of identity and their ability to deal with and integrate personal experiences?

The formation process is concerned with people's ability to integrate their sense of identity with commitments that emerge from their gospel life lived in accordance with the unique charism of their community. Formation programs are essentially intended to encourage, support, and challenge individuals to realistically assess the quality, level, and depth of their experience.

## GENERATIVE IDENTITY SOUGHT

Identity, as psychoanalyst Erik Erikson describes, is a function of an individual's ability to confront and resolve, for better or for worse, the challenges and crises that present themselves in the course of life. As young men and women approach their mid-20s to early 30s—the usual time of en-

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trance into a religious community—their identities begin to take a definitive, though not necessarily permanent, shape. By this age, their identities have begun to reflect either the generative (caring for others) or the stagnating (uncaring) pattern described by Erikson. The concerns and virtues that characterize the individual's life are also revealed. A generative pattern corresponds with the values that are central to the Christian tradition—the love of God and neighbor shown in deeds. Concern about a person's identity would suggest certain lines of inquiry to aid in evaluating his readiness for admission to a religious community. Does he possess a personally satisfying and publicly convincing answer to the questions: Who are you? Whom do you trust? Does your pattern of life reflect concern for others, for productivity, and for creating a holy and hospitable milieu?


I am assuming that the decision to seek admission to a community and especially to its novitiate is the result of a mature and serious decision-making process. Such a process, I believe, includes consideration of various career and vocational possibilities as well as the applicant's personal qualities, traits, characteristics, and abilities. I further presume that ultimately the decision will be of the individual's own free and valued choice. Initial formation, the specific period of time that is designated for the novitiate experience, can only engage

an individual at the point he has reached developmentally. He will require some degree of healing along with facilitation of personal growth. Healing, like growth, is a normal and natural need. But we must also realize that there is a limit to the amount of healing a formation program can provide. Some candidates will require professional therapy before they are ready to enter the novitiate or are permitted to take vows.

### SIGNS OF PROGRESS

Young people close to establishing a generative identity may reasonably be expected to (1) be aware of and able to express personal wants, needs, thoughts, and desires; (2) recognize interpersonal needs for affirmation, attention, autonomy, encouragement, support, freedom, and cooperation; (3) perceive areas of dependency and strive for interdependency; (4) be able to assess realistically what their capabilities are and desire to learn more about what they can become; (5) have a genuine concern for developing personal discipline; (6) assume willingly the requirements and expectations of delegated responsibility; (7) be concerned with the care of personal and communal property; (8) demonstrate adaptive responses to changing and emerging needs both personal and communal; (9) have a desire to balance and effectively relate per-

## NOVITIATE TARGETS



Provide opportunity  
to enter the life and  
experience the charisma  
of the community

Personal  
development  
of candidate

Assessment of  
candidate's relations  
with director of formation,  
peers, and community  
as a whole

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**There are  
individuals who will  
do anything for  
anyone at any time  
but who are not  
motivated by a sense  
of personal identity.**

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sonal and communal needs; and (10) not only accept fraternal feedback but be able to respond in a positive, constructive manner.

#### **CRITERIA FOR CANDIDATES**

I believe these ten types of behavior provide a partial but useful list for gauging maturity. Each criterion is observable, measurable, and practical when applied in the context of the director of formation's personal relationship with an individual. They relate to issues that young religious have to grapple with while seeking to synthesize and integrate their experience. In fact, the presence or absence of these characteristics and issues can denote the stage and direction of an individual's development (i.e., toward generativity or toward stagnation). The list can also be useful in determining the rate of progress that an individual is making within the formation process. It is essential that candidates learn, both within themselves and in dialogue with their director, to formulate satisfying, credible answers to these crucial questions of human development. If they cannot respond to these questions in a straightforward way, they may suffer a good deal of stress and anxiety when entering into close community living. Moreover, it is crucial at this point that a judgment of readiness not be misunderstood as a judgment of personal worth. The question being asked is not what kind of person this is but whether he has achieved a sufficient sense of personal worth, awareness, and identity to be accepted into a formation process in which he must adopt the different values, meanings, and sense of time that are involved in living in a gospel community with a unique charism.

Prenovitiate (affiliation) programs must determine the candidate's degree of readiness for a more intense type of experience. The novitiate, by nature and intent, is a unique and time-limited experience that terminates in a commitment. I believe that the previously mentioned ten patterns of behavior can be applied in prenovitiate programs to judge a person's readiness to make the transition to a different form of life. These patterns are among the most necessary conditions for entering into and benefiting from subsequent stages of personal development, life in community, and ministry.

But, the novitiate is a period devoted to more than just issues of personal development, it also allows an individual to experience the charism of a particular community. The formation process and the novitiate must provide an opportunity to honestly and realistically assess the relationship of the individual to the director of formation, to his peers, and to the community as a whole. It must be remembered that community living is group living with all the advantages and drawbacks that this implies. Moreover, there is an important difference between ordinary virtuous people and persons singled out by God to live in a religious community, a difference that must be kept in mind for the good of the individual, the community he joins, and the Church he will serve. That difference, of course, is one of vocation—a graced personal call.

A candidate's ability and willingness to enter into community living must be evidenced in more than desire and thought. The individual's intentions and aspirations must be embodied in observable attitudes and behavior patterns, broadly defined as a growing awareness of, concern for, and responsiveness to others. There is a possibility that such behavior is neither rooted in personal awareness nor motivated by a genuine concern for others. There are individuals who will do anything for anyone at any time but who are not motivated by a sense of personal identity. They can be recognized in a group as the pleasers or the busy bees. Though they may be well intentioned, they will do anything and everything except sit down and talk to you about themselves—their inner struggles, needs, hopes, dreams, and desires. Such people may be exploitable blessings to have around, but do they actually experience a sense of belonging or a challenge to grow as persons of dignity and worth? Do we really know, accept, and love them as persons of value and worth, or do we simply appreciate all that they do for us?

Behavior that can give us a reliable indication of a person's relationship to his group include (1) the ability to express thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and attitudes to and within the group; (2) the ability and the inclination to spend time with the group when it gathers for prayer, meals, and recreation; (3) the ability to get actively involved in the dynamics of the group as indicated by attentive listening, understanding responses, and spontane-



ous reactions to what is taking place; (4) the ability to volunteer as opposed to waiting to be included by others; (5) the ability and willingness to take initiative within the group by calling the group to task and by creating conversations and/or engaging in them; and (6) the ability and readiness to articulate awareness of what is happening within the group (i.e., content and process observations) as evidence of the dynamics of inclusion, exclusion, power, and affection.

The capacity for awareness and careful evaluation of a candidate's behavior is not limited to professionals; my own concern is with a person's ability to perceive reality. Skill in making such observations and reporting them is, I believe, a *sine qua non* among the qualities and characteristics needed in a formation director.

A young person's awareness of the needs and concerns of others cannot be presumed nor should it be discussed on a merely theoretical level. Such awareness is desirable, but alone it is not sufficient. Only individuals who actively seek to clarify their sense of identity and who strive to cultivate the skills necessary for individual and communal living are ready to make a vowed commitment.

## **SPIRITUALITY IS ESSENTIAL**

A person's piety and approach to spiritual life can reveal a great deal about the roots and nature of his personal identity, if we are willing to examine him from this perspective. The process of formation, the needs and demands of the Church, and the requirements of our communities encourage us to do so. It is essential that we face such questions as: Do the central dynamics of this individual's spiritual life reflect an authentic tradition, or are they a reprise of a particular, historical phase of that tradition's fossilized past? Does his spiritual life lead him to or away from a deep and genuine love of self, others, and God? Does it lead him to a deeper understanding of and commitment to God and to the realities of creation?

An individual's approach to spirituality tells us something about his personal commitment or his lack thereof. What he does or does not do in actuality is indicative of the kind and quality of the response he is making to the presence of the Holy One. For example, whether, where, in what manner, or for how long a person prays is not as crucial a question as whether or not, and to what extent, his relations with self, others, and the world are a true manifestation of an authentic relation with a loving and lovable God.

## **SIGNS OF GOD'S ACTION**

Theologian Karl Rahner has stated that grace is the "sanctifying formative principle of the whole body-soul life of man, coming down into his concrete, tangible daily life, where it receives its ex-

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**Does his  
spiritual life  
lead him to or  
away from a deep  
and genuine love  
of self, others,  
and God?**

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pression and takes on its corporality." Grace is the gift of God's love continually offered in his relationships with his people, and we should be able to see signs of its presence. What concrete, tangible signs of God's grace giving are reflected and observable in the life of individuals? St. Paul's Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:1-6) suggests that these signs include patience, kindness, good manners, peacefulness, happiness with the truth, the ability and willingness to forgive, and an other-centered orientation. His letter to the Galatians (5:22) adds the signs of goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.

If these are behavioral manifestations that God is present and acting as a formative principle within the life of an individual, we are logically forced to ask: What sort of person are we observing? Do we recognize him as someone who is jealous, conceited, selfish, irritable; who eats or drinks or smokes to excess; who is inhospitable to guests, rarely smiles, and seldom laughs; who is at the center of every disagreement; who regularly chooses to be alone; who never quite understands what you expect or are concerned about, rarely takes initiative, and always demands something extra to be content or to accomplish the task? An affirmative answer to many of these points is likely a signal that the director is only serving as a caretaker rather than actually forming someone for life in community and ministry within the Church.

## **VALIDITY THROUGHOUT ADULT LIFE**

I have, in a limited and sketchy way, identified some areas of concern and suggested behavioral correlates to the issue of readiness for religious life.

The questions I have proposed are valid throughout the adult life cycle, even though they cannot be asked in the same way at each stage of development. I believe that if they are seriously asked and honestly answered, they will help to develop the foundation for a truly generative life pattern.

### **COSTS OF NEGLECT**

The importance of confronting and constructively resolving the conflicts appropriate to particular life stages cannot be overemphasized. Issues that are deferred or suppressed in the early stages of formation have the potential to prevent a later resolution of these and other concerns. The cumulative effect of such inattention to a person's fundamental human questions serves only to weaken his personal commitments and to leave him unprepared to deal successfully with questions of faith and the demands of ministry later on.

Even after an individual has established a sense of identity reflecting his ability to trust as well as a desire for mutuality and interdependence in relations, he may still find the challenge of living a particular charism in community difficult and threatening. But, if he has attained a high level of development and integration, he may well experience the threat and challenge as an enlivening call to new and deeper growth. Those, however, who have not been able to resolve their conflicts over trust and identity may experience their commu-

nity, its demands, and its expectations as a disintegrating force in their lives. Their ability to enter comfortably into the dynamic life of the group will be limited by their lack of readiness to confront the challenges and conflicts that normally emerge.

It should not be assumed that an individual lacking a sufficient readiness at one level of formation will be able to compensate for it at some subsequent level. His failure to have reached an appropriate state of readiness upon entrance into any group may result in confusion, resistance, and the adoption of a facadelike identity.

The duty of a gospel community is to challenge individuals to discover their talents and charisms and to call on them to integrate these with the charisms of the community—not to require that they assume roles and project images. The ideal and dutiful novice, like the thoroughly joyful child, exists in dreams; he is rarely encountered in real life. Fortunately, there are many good religious who emerge from the novitiate with a generative identity, ready to act according to its possibilities.

I consider it unjust and disrespectful to be afraid or unwilling to challenge and support an individual in his struggle to become a person. It is unfair and dishonest not to insist that he confront the crucial issues of life at the appropriate times; they will have to be dealt with sooner or later. Unless we courageously ask the hard questions when and as they arise, we are not truly involved in Kingdom-focused formation to community and ministry.



# MEEKNESS AND INNER STRENGTH

Marian Cowan, C.S.J.

**I**n the summer of 1979, I was on retreat in Sedalia, Colorado. I had been outdoors, contemplating Jesus in the early days of his public life, when I happened to glance northward, only to find my attention captured by the brown cloud hanging over Denver. I was struck by the density of pollution that could be seen so clearly from 20 miles away. But I had been in contemplation of Jesus in Galilee, so I turned back to him. Within my prayer I could hear Jesus saying, "No, Marian, don't look away. Look at the pollution. That's what I'm talking about—people polluting each other's lives."

It seems to me that the second beatitude addresses this problem. It speaks of the earth that we are to give to one another as heritage, and it speaks of the meekness, or nonviolence, that will enable us to do this.

Violence and pollution are detrimental to health—our own and others. They are self-destructive and contagious. In an earlier issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT we began to explore the beatitudes from the aspect of healthy living in today's reality. We looked at the first beatitude closely then; now let us explore the second.

Blessed, happy, are the gentle,  
the meek;  
they shall inherit the earth.

Meekness has not been the most popular virtue in the development of the human race. In fact, the connotation of meekness in the minds of most West-

erners has a pejorative ring to it. And yet Jesus calls us to meekness, to gentleness, to lowliness, to be down to earth.

What does Jesus mean by this? In Matthew 5:38-42 he says to us:

You have learnt how it was said: "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth." But I say this to you. Offer the wicked person no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer that person the other as well, if someone takes you to law and would have your tunic, let that person have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

This is the stuff of meekness, of gentleness. It is a far cry from what society teaches us, or even from what rises spontaneously within when we meet with injustice. When someone takes something from us or strikes us or forces us against our will, that is injustice. And as anger, a truly just anger, rises and threatens to take over, the tendency is to strike back, to teach that person a lesson. But, when anger explodes into violence it usually generates more violence. Meekness teaches us how to channel this anger into something productive. In the second beatitude Jesus teaches us that injustice is to be

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overcome by nonviolence. That is hard, but it is the only way to be happy. Meeting violence with violence, injustice with injustice, only multiplies the evil and leaves us feeling hollow.

Even as I write this I am mindful of a friend whose life has been threatened by a woman obviously psychologically unbalanced. What should my friend do? Nothing? Is that what Christ means? As the pursuer attempts again and again to physically harm her, is the Christian, nonviolent response supposed to allow injury without any defense? The true nature of meekness becomes clear when the words of Jesus are applied to a real-life situation. He, himself, slipped away from those who would cast him over the hill. How would he apply his own words to my friend?

It seems to me he is cautioning against retaliation (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth). He is leading us to be responders instead of reactors, to try to get inside the skin of other persons so that we can understand them and let our response be molded by that understanding. My friend is very much aware of the psychotic state of her pursuer. She has been ineffectual in counseling the woman to seek psychiatric help. She has been forced to move from her home, to use a different car, and to live in anxiety. Her last resort has been to turn to the courts for help for the woman, for society, and for herself. The whole thing continues to be a harrowing experience. But underneath the tension she has found the deep peace of being at one with the Lord in seeking the welfare of the person who attacks, instead of acting (reacting) out of fear or anger or the innate tendency to strike back.

We are not all pursued by someone who wishes us harm. But we have all suffered at the hands of another at some time in our lives. What do we do when that happens? What do we feel inside? "If someone takes your tunic, let the person have your cloak as well." I remember well the coat I bought some time ago. It was gray wool and styled nicely, with sleeves that were just right for my long arms. And I had bought it on sale. I had the coat for exactly ten days when it was stolen from my car. Anger, frustration, and disbelief surged through me. I never really accepted the loss of that coat and often found myself scanning passersby to see if anyone was wearing it. In my best moments I hoped that it was worn by somebody who needed it more than I did. But that was the best I could do.

That was a coat. But what of the more important things of life? What of the persons deprived of the essentials of life, of dignity, of justice? What of the anger that rises then? Surely it is a just anger—not wrong to feel. It is what we do with it that makes a difference. Emotions generated by such injustice have produced heroes and leaders for those of us who believe nonviolent resistance is possible. And difficult. And dangerous. And very Christian.

There is a difference between a person who knuckles under in a situation and a person who is

truly meek. The difference lies in attitude—the attitude of nonviolence. The person who knuckles under and is just waiting for a chance to get even is one who is violent within. On the other hand, the person who is truly meek and in control of his inner self can freely give up control. This isn't easy, but it is possible. In the Garden of Olives, Jesus provides us with a perfect example. After celebrating the Paschal meal with his friends, he proceeds down the Kedron Valley. Gradually disengaging himself, he moves into the heart of the garden where a desperate struggle ensues. He acknowledges to his Father and to himself his weakness, his fear, his reluctance to continue into the madness of the circumstances toward which he is being propelled. And, yet, he knows he cannot be anything but his authentic self. In other words, to turn back would be impossible if he is to remain true to his mission and to himself. The struggle is terrible. Time and again he turns to his friends for help, but they cannot give it. Returning to his Father, he finally throws himself on the ground in bodily prayer and surrenders to the deepest part of himself. When he eventually rises and greets his betrayer he is able to hold out his hands to be bound. He exhibits a new and powerful inner strength, profoundly manifest in his meekness. Although he is prisoner and is being taken to his death, he is the one in obvious control.

This kind of abandonment is open to us, too, to assist us in living as close as possible to the truth of our own being. There are individuals today who are graced with a meekness that exhibits this power. Dom Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, is one of them. In the documentary film *Excuse Me, America*, Dom Helder recounts a conversation with his father when, as a child, he tells of his desire to become a priest. His father's reply is, "I want to tell you something. If you become a priest there is no room for egoism." Dom Helder appears to be a man without egoism, he is meek. And this meekness has given him the strength to risk his life fighting the injustices that oppress his people. His nonviolent approach exemplifies what meekness can do.

Absolute lack of egoism gives space for powerful vulnerability—vulnerability to the movement of the Spirit within and to the strength that comes only from God. It also makes one powerfully supple, like bamboo that bends with the wind but does not snap. Meekness, lack of egoism, makes Dom Helder a threat to the forces of the world around him. And, while those forces may someday overcome his body, they cannot bruise his spirit, which, like that of the martyred bishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero, will live on in his people when his body is gone.

Resisting oppression and fighting injustice with meekness are only half the story. The other half deals with the self as oppressor—a role none of us likes to admit. But spiritual health demands that we lay claim to our total being, and most of us will



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## How often the oppressed person, once liberated, becomes the oppressor.

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find that we act oppressively toward others from time to time. When we have the perfect put-down or stridently insist that ours is the only answer, or when we make another feel inferior, we are anything but meek. How often the oppressed person, once liberated, becomes the oppressor! Is this the inheritance of which Jesus spoke? Possessing the land, in this case, does not bring the happiness of the beatitude but the sadness of not being true to the deepest self, where one is made in the image and likeness of God. What is the "earth" that one comes to inherit by meekness? It is the inner terrain of our own being, where a person can taste both radical freedom and the most devastating slavery. The meek are in possession of self. They are in touch with the profound reality of their own being, which nobody can take from them. They are the gentle ones, the poor in spirit, the humble of heart. The meek are strong enough to be gentle.

Another aspect of being meek resides in our being gentle with the earth. The beatitude states, "... they shall inherit the earth." If we are gentle with the earth we shall be able to pass that heritage on to future generations. We have been given the earth—to care for it, to become interdependent with it. If we give it our respect, it will produce for and nourish us. But in our greed and insensitivity, we have ravaged vast areas and have rendered whole generations impoverished. Witness Appalachia, where our strip mining has destroyed acres of inheritance and left the ugly scars of wastefulness to testify against us.

To be meek and gentle with the earth demands a sense of love—nonwastefulness, thoughtfulness, carefulness, reverence for all creation. Affluent

societies are throwaway societies. The litter on our city streets and highways attests to our lack of reverence. Respect for creation would compel us to return to the earth what we have taken from it and to reuse what is possible. Simple things like compost heaps and the recycling of aluminum and paper are attempts to show our reverence.

I have the distinction, I suppose, of being one of the few people who have ever "ash-pitted" in Aspen, Colorado. Aspen is the epitome of affluence, with lovely walks and pleasant surroundings available for the wealthy vacationer. Even the trash barrels scattered along the walks have a touch of class about them. One day some friends and I were spending a weekend in the mountains and had about an hour in Aspen. After an ice cream we asked for some large containers and proceeded to walk through town picking recyclable aluminum cans out of the trash barrels. At the bus depot people asked what we were doing, and we used our explanation to encourage them toward greater reverence for the earth. It was fun, actually, to do a little countercultural activity in one of the resort centers of the Rockies.

All of this, then, is part of the second beatitude. There is a challenge that goes deep and reiterates the call to poverty of spirit. It is not always easy, but it is satisfying, and it gives us a happiness beyond our imaginings.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

How do I live the second beatitude?  
How do I find myself reacting  
to oppression and injustice?  
Am I aware of my own tendency  
to control others?  
Do I ever experience  
the inner freedom that  
meekness brings?  
Am I mindful  
of the care I should be giving  
our natural resources?

### RECOMMENDED READING

Camara, D. H. *The Desert is Fertile*. New York: Orbis Books, 1974.

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# Book Reviews

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*Transpersonal Psychotherapy*, edited by Seymour Boorstein, M.D., Science and Behavior Books, Inc., Palo Alto, California, 1980, 409 pp., \$19.95.

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Transpersonal psychotherapy is a meetingplace for scientific healing and mysticism. In this newly published work psychoanalyst Seymour Boorstein brings together the latest investigations and theories of the foremost authorities in the field. The high quality of this volume introduces us to a fascinating world in which the wall between the mystical and scientific therapies is breached. The goal of transpersonal psychotherapy is not a successful adjustment to society but a deep personal experience of liberation, enlightenment, and individuation.

The range of topics in *Transpersonal Psychotherapy* includes the most important issues and developments in the field of contemporary therapies. Boorstein and his collaborators describe the Jungian approach, Gestalt therapy, meditation, metaphoric language, logotherapy, dream workshops and healing, Buddhist teachings, Sufism, biofeedback, and psychosynthesis, to name just a few of the therapeutic modalities represented.

Contemporaries of Sigmund Freud were advised not to make any judgment on the psychoanalytic method without having personally undergone psychoanalysis. A similar piece of advice should be given to people inclined to evaluate transpersonal psychotherapy, one of the newest approaches to treatment of the psyche. The clinicians and researchers who have adopted this creative method seem uniformly convinced that human life is a ceaseless journey without arrival, a lifelong striving for perfection. This concept applies to the therapist as much as to his client. The therapist, of course, must never be satisfied with his achieve-

ments, although paradoxically he must be at peace within himself if he wants to be successful.

Early in the book, Dr. Gerald May comments, "Whatever transpersonal psychology really is, I hope it will never be defined as objectively as analytical and behavioral psychology have been. If and when that should happen, transpersonal psychology will cease to be the catalyst for pilgrimages in growth and healing that it now is. It will become simply another in the long line of mental conceptualizations which we human beings use to complicate our lives."

This stimulating and comprehensive book should provide enlightenment and be an inspiration not only for clinicians but also for any serious student of humanity seeking to guide others through the human labyrinth. The book's theme makes it easier for us to understand the statement Freud wrote in one of his letters, "If I had my life to live all over again, I should devote myself to psychical research."

—Eduardo Pinzon, S.J.

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*Unfinished Business: Pressure Points in the Lives of Women*, by Maggie Scarf, New York, Doubleday & Co., 1980, 581 pp., \$14.95.

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Maggie Scarf, a journalist and psychiatric researcher, was exploring the scientific literature about manic-depressive illness when she encountered some disturbing statistics on women and depression. She found that from two to six times as many women as men in this country are being treated for depression. Wondering why this disproportion exists, she found herself immersed in researching the question when an event occurred that jolted her out of her academic detachment.

A friend and tennis companion had failed to arrive on court one day at the arranged time. Scarf fumed over the woman's apparent lack of consideration; she hadn't displayed even the most com-

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Father Pinzon is a clinical psychologist currently studying at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California.



mon level of courtesy by phoning to cancel the tennis date or by calling later to explain her absence. Two days later at a party the author was told that her friend was lying in a hospital bed. She was near death, having unsuccessfully attempted suicide a few days earlier. Scarf could not recall any signs that might have signaled her friend's suicidal depression. Later she learned that the woman had been fighting hard to present the image of a "well-adjusted, happily married" Yale faculty wife.

The episode prompted the author to attempt a more personal, in-depth examination of the reasons women become depressed. Four years of interviewing and of combing psychiatric literature resulted in her book *Unfinished Business*. In it Scarf details the history of ten women of different ages who have undergone treatment for depression. She observes that in each stage of adulthood, a woman's depression is generally centered around the same sorts of things. In adolescence the concerns of young women are centered around body image and the wrench of separation from parents; during their 20s, women's preoccupations are related to their search for intimacy and commitment. In their 30s, many women focus their attention on the mistakes they have already made and the price they have had to pay for them. A little later, at midlife, women are troubled over their loss of identity to roles they may no longer fulfill—for example, as rooting sections for their husband's accomplishments or as nourishers of their dependent children's growth. Scarf discovered that in each of these experiences women are "both genetically and socially programmed to be more susceptible to depression than men." From her point of view, the central problem in women's lives is that of reconciling their need for autonomy, or self-direction, with the biologic and social drives toward forming close attachments.

The book's chapter "Body and Mind" describes the symptoms of depression in a way that can be useful to spiritual directors and religious superiors who may hear the complaints of depressed women and not recognize them as evidence of depression. She also offers warnings on the use of medications

that can cause serious harm if prescribed injudiciously and on the possible deleterious side effects of any specific drug.

Most of the case histories are centered on the lives of women involved in relationships foreign to women with religious vows—marital and maternal attachments, for example—but the feelings of loss, rejection, and separation are common to all women, whatever their chosen state of life.

Scarf admits that her book is not the female version of Yale psychiatrist Daniel Levinson's popular *Seasons of a Man's Life*. (It is hoped that the critical seasons in women's adult life will be scientifically described in the near future.) Her work, which deals principally with women experiencing the almost indescribable pain of depression, explores the unresolved psychological issues that hold women back; it also looks at the "biochemical predispositions, which seem to lead to depression." Finally it presents Scarf's reflections on various treatments and cures.

The book's contention that women suffer more depression than men do is, I believe, debatable. It is true that more women than men are treated for depression. However, it may also be true that men are depressed as often but find it more difficult to seek psychiatric or psychological help, perhaps because they are reluctant to place themselves in a dependent state within the therapeutic relationship. Furthermore, there is a possibility that religious, both women and men, suffer from depression even more than laypersons do because of a tendency to be dominated by a rigid superego and an ego ideal that is far from obtainable.

*Unfinished Business* is very well written and offers a great deal of understanding about the possible causes of depression in women. It emphasizes, reassuringly, that not all depressions require professional treatment. Its principal contribution, in my opinion, lies in the positive way it asserts that a woman—or anyone—need not go through life holding on to, or being held back by, any unfinished emotional business.

—Linda Amadeo, R.N., M.S.



## Coming up in *Human Development*

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**A Need for Silence in Religious Life**



**The Problem of Permanent Commitment**



**Formation for the Social Apostolate**



**Styles of Religious Leadership**



**Use of Fantasy in Spiritual Direction**



**Referral for Professional Treatment**



**Intimacy: Is it a Developmental Necessity?**



**Theater and Cinema in Religious Formation**



**Male and Female Menopause**



**A Clean Heart in an Erotic World**



## Theft Interferes with HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**F**or years I have been hearing friends, relatives, and acquaintances in big cities describe the anger and sorrow they experienced when precious belongings were suddenly taken from them by robbery or theft. Some had come home at night to find their house or apartment stripped of highly prized objects; others had been accosted on the street and forced to surrender purse, billfold, jewelry, or money at knifepoint or gunpoint. Many had returned to their parking place to find their car stolen. Most of them never saw their possessions again. I always felt sorry for these victims of injustice, particularly since they inevitably suffered a lasting diminution of their trust toward their neighbors. Something died within them.

On June 20 the inevitable finally happened to me. Someone broke into the trunk of the car I had parked in New York City and stole the suitcases I intended to bring with me on a plane to San Francisco. I had left the car parked on the street and had gone to buy some books for use in a course I was preparing to teach. Just a few minutes earlier I had placed in one of the suitcases an armful of letters, manuscripts, requests, and heaven knows what else that had been mailed to me at our publisher's office on John Street. I have no idea what most of the stolen envelopes contained. Already I am receiving letters from people who are upset over not having received acknowledgment of their communications or response to their requests. For such inconveniences to our readers and writers I am deeply sorry. If you have been expecting a reply from HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and have begun to feel forgotten or ignored, please write again to let us know what you sent or asked. We will do all we can to make up for this frustrating delay.

For the first time in my life I think I understand the meaning of Jesus' warning that "death comes like a thief in the night." It is a painful but salutary lesson to learn—especially when the thief has done the job as swiftly and thoroughly as mine did *in broad daylight*.

James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.  
Editor-in-Chief